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HEADLINE	05/03 Pope: NATO shares blame for Ukraine war
SOURCE	https://religionnews.com/2022/05/03/pope-francis-says-nato-barking-at-russias-door-facilitated-ukraine-conflict/

VATICAN CITY (RNS) — Pope Francis told an Italian newspaper on Tuesday (May 3) that NATO may be partly to blame for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and he said he hopes to visit Moscow to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin in hopes of brokering a peace.

Talking to reporters from *Il Corriere della Sera*, Francis said that "NATO barking at Russia's doors" may have raised alarms in the Kremlin about the Western European alliance's intentions in Ukraine. "I can't say if (Russia's) anger was provoked," he continued, "but facilitated, maybe yes."

In the interview, Francis again recalled his first reaction to the news of the invasion in late February. On the first day of war, he said, he called Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and then left his apartment on an impromptu visit to Aleksandr Avdeyev, Russia's ambassador to the Holy See. "I wanted to make a clear gesture for the whole world to see and for this reason I went to the Russian ambassador," the pope said.

The pope praised Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin for his role in seeking diplomacy options for a resolution to the war. "A great diplomat," the pope said about his second in command at the Vatican. "He knows how to move in this world, I trust and confide in him a lot."

Parolin issued a message from the pope to Putin after 20 days of war in Ukraine, Francis said, which stated his intention to visit Moscow. "We have not yet received an answer and we are still pushing," the pope said, "even if I fear that Putin does not want to have this meeting at this time."

Referring to a conflict that has already caused almost 3,000 civilian casualties, according to the United Nations, the pope asked, "How can you stop such brutality?" He seemed to compare the violence in Ukraine to the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

While expressing his intention to become the first pope to visit Russia, a dream long harbored by his predecessors, Francis said that he will not visit Kyiv for the time being. The pope has sent two representatives, Cardinal Konrad Krajewski and Cardinal Michael Czerny, to the Ukrainian border as a show of closeness with the Ukrainian people.

"But I feel that I mustn't go," he said. "I must first go to Moscow, I must first meet with Putin. But I am a priest, what can I do? I do what I can. If only Putin would open the door."

Francis also addressed Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow Kirill, with whom the Vatican has entertained multiple diplomatic efforts and whom the pope met for the first time in Havana in 2016. Since the beginning of conflict, Kirill has been an outspoken supporter of Putin's claim for hegemony in Ukraine, raising tensions in Catholic-Orthodox relations.

Kirill spoke to Francis via Zoom conference on March 16 since their meeting, originally scheduled March 16 in Jerusalem, had to be canceled due to the start of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. "Holding a paper in his hands, (Kirill) read me all the justifications for the war for the first 20 minutes," Francis said.

"Brother, we are not clerics of the state," Francis was said to have replied. "We cannot use the language of politics, but of Jesus. For this reason, we must seek roads to peace, to cease the firing of weapons."

"The Patriarch cannot be transformed into Putin's altar boy," Francis said, adding that Kirill now agrees on the need to find a road to peace.

Since the beginning of his pontificate, Francis has been a strong voice for disarmament, be it while praying at the sites of the nuclear bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan or begging for peace in war-torn Yemen. Asked about his position on sending weapons to assist the Ukrainian people against Russia, the pope appeared ambivalent.

“I can’t answer, I am too far away,” he said. “What is clear is that in that land, weapons are being tested. Russia now knows that tanks are not very useful, and they are thinking about other things. That is why you make wars: to test the weapons we have created.”

Francis said that while rarely contested, “arms sales are a scandal.”

During the Via Crucis procession at Rome’s Colosseum on April 15, Francis spoke about his concerns about a third world war fought piecemeal in every corner of the world, and those concerns were still on his mind in the interview. “In Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Africa, one war after another,” the pope said. “In every little piece there are international interests.

“One cannot think that a free state can make war with another free state,” Francis continued, adding that “in Ukraine it was others who caused the conflict.”

Francis said that Ukrainians are “a martyred people,” deeply wounded from the aftermath of the Second World War and Soviet occupation.

The conflict in Ukraine seems to have bettered the Vatican’s relations with Hungarian leader Viktor Orban, who told the pope of Russia’s plan to somehow resolve the conflict May 9. “I hope that’s the case and it would explain the quickness of the escalation these past days,” Francis said.

“I am a pessimist,” the pope added, “but we must do every possible gesture to stop the war.”

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HEADLINE	05/03 Russia destroying Ukraine infrastructure
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/03/russias-war-in-ukraine-causing-36bn-of-building-damage-a-week
GIST	<p>Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is inflicting damage to the country’s infrastructure at a cost of \$4.5bn (£3.6bn) a week as bombs tear through thousands of buildings and public utilities, and miles of road.</p> <p>According to estimates compiled by the Kyiv School of Economics (KSE), and supported by the Ukrainian government, the total amount of direct infrastructure damage has reached \$92bn since Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion in February.</p> <p>Academics said the figure rose by almost \$4.5bn in the week to 2 May, adding that their estimate is probably lower than the true cost because losses from the war are hard to quantify.</p> <p>With losses since the invasion having risen to about 60% of annual economic output, the researchers said Ukraine was suffering heavy damage to infrastructure that will be expensive to repair or rebuild. The KSE said its project, Russia Will Pay, was based on analysis of thousands of reports of damage caused during the invasion, which have been submitted by citizens, government agencies and local authorities.</p> <p>The snapshot showed that the bulk of the infrastructure costs relate to bomb damage inflicted on buildings, roads, factories and businesses, based on the open-source data project to track the cost of the war.</p> <p>More than 33.7 million sq metres of residential buildings have been hit by missiles, bombs and suffered other damage during the war, worth almost \$30bn in total. More than 23,000km of road have been ripped up or pockmarked by shelling, and almost 90,000 cars, worth billions of dollars combined, have been damaged.</p> <p>The KSE said the overall economic costs of the war – when damage to infrastructure is taken with the impact on GDP, the cessation of investments and the outflow of workers as millions flee the country – could rise to \$600bn, almost four times the value of annual GDP.</p>

	<p>The figures compare with estimates made by the World Bank in mid-April, which suggested that physical infrastructure worth about \$60bn had been damaged, a figure that was expected to continue rising.</p> <p>Last month, the International Monetary Fund said Ukraine's economy would probably contract by about 35% this year, while the loss of life, destruction of infrastructure and exodus of workers would severely impede its economy for many years to come, even if the war ended soon.</p> <p>Boris Johnson, who addressed the Ukrainian parliament on Tuesday, suggested in March that Ukraine might need a "new Marshall plan", referring to the US aid package used after the second world war to help rebuild the economies of Europe.</p> <p>The IMF has provided \$1.4bn in emergency financing to help meet Ukraine's immediate spending needs, while the World Bank is mobilising financial support worth about \$2.5bn.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/04 Investigators: war crime evidence in Irpin
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/04/world/ukraine-russia-war-news#investigators-find-evidence-of-war-crimes-in-the-kyiv-suburb-of-irpin
GIST	<p>Ukrainian officials investigating accusations of atrocities committed by Russian forces have found evidence of a litany of war crimes in the Kyiv suburb of Irpin, including torture, mass killings and the use of banned weapons, Ukraine's prosecutor general said on Tuesday.</p> <p>Speaking during a televised news conference in Irpin, which was one of the most fiercely contested battlefields in the early phase the war, the prosecutor general, Iryna Venediktova, said 290 bodies had been recovered for forensic examination in the city.</p> <p>She said her team had identified one Russian soldier who she said was responsible for torturing at least 10 people. The victims "had their phones confiscated," and then they were "beaten on the ribs and legs, threatened with death, and denied food and water," she said. She said the soldier had been helped by others who had not yet been identified.</p> <p>Investigators have confirmed that Russia's 64th Separate Motor Rifle Brigade had been in Irpin. That is the same unit whose members have been accused of kidnapping and torturing unarmed civilians in the nearby town of Bucha.</p> <p>Prosecutors had also documented summary shootings and mass burials in seven locations, Ms. Venediktova said, as well as the use of numerous weapons banned under the Geneva Conventions, including antipersonnel mines and shells with arrow-shaped shrapnel.</p> <p>When asked about mounting reports of Russian soldiers raping Ukrainians, Ms. Venediktova said she anticipated a "huge number" of cases would emerge but she did not disclose how many were being investigated. In the first two weeks of April, about 400 cases of sexual violence by Russian soldiers were reported to Ukraine's ombudswoman for human rights.</p> <p>"Victims are not ready to speak," Ms. Venediktova said, adding that many survivors of the assaults remain in Russian-held territories and fear reprisals.</p> <p>In the coming days, senior U.N. officials and investigators are expected to provide more resources to the authorities in Ukraine to help prosecute sex crimes. Pramila Patten, the top U.N. official for sexual violence in conflicts, said last week that six investigators would soon join an international monitoring team in Ukraine to document sex attacks as potential war crimes.</p> <p>The influx of international support is feeding a wider push to verify reports of sex crimes and to train prosecutors in Ukraine to preserve evidence and protect traumatized victims during questioning.</p>

	<p>The Kremlin has denied the accusations of war crimes and sexual violence and has dismissed images of apparent victims of atrocities in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha as staged. But as evidence has mounted that Russian forces purposely killed Ukrainian civilians without cause, world leaders have vowed to hold President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia to account.</p> <p>Ms. Venediktova accused Mr. Putin on Tuesday of being “the main criminal of the 21st century” and said that he should “absolutely” be prosecuted for war crimes committed by his soldiers.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/04 Russia missiles hit power stations in Lviv
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/04/world/ukraine-russia-war-news#lviv-ukraine-russia-missiles
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine — Russian missiles struck power plants in Lviv on Tuesday night, knocking out electricity in much of the western Ukrainian city near the Polish border where tens of thousands of civilians fleeing fighting in the east have sought refuge.</p> <p>The attacks were the most widespread strikes inside the city since the war began, and came as the Russian military pressed its attacks on Ukraine’s railway system, the country’s lifeline to Poland, carrying both humanitarian aid and supplies for the military.</p> <p>Altogether, Russian forces hit six electrical substations along the railway system in central and western Ukraine, said Oleksandr Kamyshin, the head of the Ukrainian Railway.</p> <p>The mayor of Lviv, Andriy Sadovyi, said two power stations had been hit in the city, adding that there was “serious damage to the municipal infrastructure.” The head of the Lviv regional administration, Maksym Kozytskyy, later said that three power stations had been hit. Two people were reported injured.</p> <p>A missile last month hit a garage near railway tracks on the outskirts of Lviv, killing at least seven people.</p> <p>In addition to cutting off electricity, Tuesday’s attacks also halted water pumping in some areas of Lviv.</p> <p>The explosions were heard in the center of Lviv on Tuesday evening. Near the railway tracks on the outskirts of town, black smoke billowed in the distance while ambulances and fire trucks sped from the site.</p> <p>Police cruisers blocked roads to prevent vehicles from getting closer. Houses and apartment buildings were dark in many neighborhoods with the only light coming from streetlights still operating. City officials said emergency equipment in hospitals, which were also plunged into darkness, had kept going with backup electrical systems.</p> <p>At another impact site, white smoke billowed from near the train tracks. Only a sliver of a moon illuminated the pitch-dark streets.</p> <p>Mykhailo, a security guard who did not want to give his last name, said he took cover behind a concrete wall when the blasts hit.</p> <p>“I haven’t felt an explosion this close before,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/04 Drone enthusiasts; hobby into war weapon
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/04/world/ukraine-russia-war-news#ukrainian-drone-hobbyists
GIST	<p>In a workshop in western Ukraine, a group of hobby drone pilots gathered around a table recently as a technician fitted a racing drone to carry a grenade, turning an aircraft found in hobby stores into a weapon in the war against Russia.</p>

Two American businesspeople, who had arrived from the United States with a donation of a dozen similar drones, watched.

The drones are a small part of an unprecedented public response to appeals by the Ukrainian military for resources to help it fight much better equipped Russian forces.

“Basically we have a little drone hub here,” said a Ukrainian drone operator who for security reasons asked to be identified only by his middle name, Oleksandr.

He also asked that the location of the workshop remain undisclosed. “We’re building drones and rebuilding existing drones to use in rescue operations, military operations and search operations.”

In practice, many of the hobby drones have a short life.

“The enemy is hitting them so some of them live for just a day or two,” Oleksandr said, referring to the fact that drones can be shot down in flight. “But in that day or two they have important missions. We are protecting ourselves.”

The group is also making the drones simpler to control and training Ukrainian service members to use fly them. The hobby drones brought from the United States are first-person view, meaning they have a camera transmitting live images to a pair of goggles. This makes it seem as if the pilot is in a cockpit. The drones reach speeds of up to 80 miles an hour and Oleksandr said pilots flying them in professional competitions train for years.

Unlike the United States, where drone pilots must pass tests, in Ukraine they are essentially unregulated.

“For drone hobbyists in the U.S. to do anything with military equipment is practically impossible,” said Chad Kapper, the founder of Rotor Riot, whose holding company Red Cat Holdings supplied 10 of the drones he delivered to Ukraine. “The hobby stuff is unregulated in a certain sense so they can use as much as they can get.”

Mr. Kapper, a former Marine whose Flite Test YouTube channel has two million subscribers, said drones like the ones he supplied would help fill a gap while Ukraine waits for more military-grade drones. He said he got involved after reaching out to Oleksandr, who he knew from the international racing drone community, to find out how he was doing.

For Oleksandr and the other Ukrainian pilots, technicians and engineers at the drone hub, the effort is a continuation of a war that started in 2014 when the Ukrainian Army turned to civilians for help in offsetting its lack of equipment in its fight against Russia’s invasion of the Crimean Peninsula.

“The military now is calling me from different spots, from different battalions and they tell me ‘can you send more? We have run out,’” said Oleksandr, who in peacetime is a sporting event organizer.

He said the drones brought by the Americans, which each cost about \$1,000 and up, would be useful for a range of tasks such as carrying explosives, observing Russian units and targeting artillery. They could also be equipped with infrared cameras to locate and help rescue people in destroyed buildings or forests.

“There is nothing illegal,” said an entrepreneur from Tennessee who helped buy and deliver the drones in what he described as a humanitarian mission. He asked to remain anonymous because he was worried about his safety. “They requested drones. What they do with them is entirely up to them.”

The war’s narrative of a weaker country holding off a powerful aggressor and the specter of genocide in Europe has resonated strongly with Americans and others around the world.

	<p>“After sending money, I just didn’t feel like I was doing enough,” said the American businessman. “I have resources and I have connections in this part of the world. And I knew I could make a difference by putting some things in process in helping with the supply of drones.”</p> <p>Many of the drones are being funded by a local aid organization helping the military. The American businessman, who said he had been contacted by the Ukrainian military for help, said he was also setting up a charitable organization to allow people to donate to buy drones for Ukraine.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/04 Europe: more military support Moldova
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/04/world/ukraine-russia-war-news#europa-pledges-further-military-support-for-moldova
GIST	<p>The European Union promised on Wednesday to provide additional military support for Moldova, the increasingly pressured neighbor of both the bloc and Ukraine that has a Russia-backed breakaway region of its own.</p> <p>Security fears have grown in the country during the Russian invasion of Ukraine and swelled last week as a series of mysterious explosions rocked Transnistria, the separatist region of Moldova where Russia has maintained soldiers since 1992.</p> <p>This thin sliver of land, formally a part of Moldova, hosts at least 10,000 Russian and Russia-backed troops, and has been a constant source of worry for the Moldovan authorities. No one claimed responsibility for the attacks, with Russian, Ukrainian and Transnistrian authorities trading accusations, but the explosions exacerbated Moldova’s war jitters.</p> <p>Charles Michel, the president of the European Council, the body that brings together the leaders of the 27 E.U. countries, said the bloc would “significantly increase” its military support for Moldova.</p> <p>Speaking after a meeting with Moldova’s president in Chisinau, the capital, he said this support would include additional military equipment, as well as instruments to counter disinformation and cyberattacks, but he declined to provide further details. The European Union pledged 7 million euros — about \$7.4 million — in assistance for the Moldovan army last year.</p> <p>Moldova, a former Soviet republic and one of Europe’s poorest countries, has been deeply affected by the Russian attack on Ukraine, taking in more Ukrainian refugees per capita than any other nation and struggling to sustain its economy, which depends heavily on Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The European Union provided the country with €13 million in humanitarian aid to help with economic and social consequences of the war.</p> <p>The country is also extremely vulnerable from a military point of view, with only 6,000 troops and a constitutional ban on joining any military alliances, including NATO. In an attempt to step out of Russia’s long shadow, the Moldovan government formally applied in March to join the European Union, but any prospect of membership is years away.</p> <p>Transnistria lies only 25 miles from Odesa, Ukraine’s chief port and what appears to be a major target in Moscow’s military campaign. The Ukrainian military announced last week that it was moving more troops to the border in response to rising tensions in Transnistria and a Russian missile strike on a bridge that connects the area around Odesa to the rest of Ukraine.</p> <p>Moldova’s foreign minister, Nicu Popescu, described the situation last week as “a very dangerous new moment in the history of our region.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/04 Russia assault east Ukraine; civilian toll
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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/04/world/ukraine-russia-war-news#russian-strikes-on-an-eastern-region-kill-21-people-in-a-day-ukrainian-officials-say
GIST	<p>Russia's assault on Ukraine continued to take a toll on civilians on Tuesday as 21 people were killed in the eastern region of Donetsk, including a group of workers from a coke plant who were gathered at a bus stop after their shift, officials said.</p> <p>The total number of casualties, which also included 27 injured, was the highest in a day since last month, when a Russian missile struck a train station in the city of Kramatorsk, killing more than 50 people, Pavlo Kyrylenko, the Donetsk region's Ukrainian military governor, said Tuesday evening.</p> <p>The strike on the coke plant was in the town of Adiiivka, and injured an additional 20 workers badly enough to require treatment at a hospital, the company that owns the plant, Metinvest, said in a statement.</p> <p>"Another cynical crime of the Russians on our land," Mr. Kyrylenko wrote on the Telegram app, referring to the attack.</p> <p>Metinvest also owns the sprawling steelworks in the ruined city of Mariupol, which Russian troops continued to batter with shelling on Tuesday even as hundreds huddled in its underground bunkers waiting to be evacuated.</p> <p>In a rare victory for diplomacy, buses arranged by the United Nations and Red Cross successfully freed civilians from the plant for the third consecutive day on Wednesday morning, Mr. Kyrylenko said.</p> <p>The strikes in Donetsk were part of a flurry of Russian attacks on cities in at least six regions across the country on Tuesday, including the major western city of Lviv, where strikes on three electrical substations knocked out electricity in many areas.</p> <p>In his evening address, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine said Russia was targeting cities indiscriminately, with "no specific military goal."</p> <p>"Obviously, the Russian military reacted extremely nervously today to our successes," he said. "They are trying to overcome their powerlessness, because they are not able to take Ukraine."</p> <p>Russia's Defense Ministry said in a statement that its strikes on Tuesday had successfully destroyed six electric substations in western and central Ukraine. The substations had powered railroads used to shuttle American and European weapons and ammunition, the ministry said.</p> <p>Andriy Yermak, who heads the Ukrainian president's office, said that Moscow was doubling down on thwarting "Western aid with missiles," to target Ukraine's "new and powerful weapons."</p> <p>"But it will not stop," he said, referring to the flow of military aid from the West.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/04 Vanishing: lessons from gamma, iota, mu
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/04/health/covid-variants-gamma-iota-mu.html
GIST	<p>In early 2021, scientists in Colombia discovered a worrisome new coronavirus variant. This variant, eventually known as Mu, had several troubling mutations that experts believed could help it evade the immune system's defenses.</p> <p>Over the following months, Mu spread swiftly in Colombia, fueling a new surge of Covid-19 cases. By the end of August, it had been detected in dozens of countries, and the World Health Organization had designated it a "variant of interest."</p> <p>"Mu was starting to make some noise globally," said Joseph Fauver, a genomic epidemiologist at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and an author of a recent study on the variant.</p>

And then it fizzled. Today, the variant has all but vanished.

For every Delta or Omicron there is a Gamma, Iota or Mu, variants that drove local surges but never swept to global dominance. And while understanding Omicron remains a critical public health priority, there are lessons to be learned from these lesser lineages, experts say.

“This virus has no incentive to stop adapting and evolving,” said Joel Wertheim, a molecular epidemiologist at the University of California San Diego. “And seeing how it did that in the past will help us prepare for what it might do in the future.”

Studies of the also-rans have shed light on surveillance gaps and policy blunders — providing more evidence that America’s international travel bans were not effective — and on what makes the virus successful, suggesting that in the early phase of the pandemic, transmissibility was more important than immune evasion.

The research also highlights how much context matters; variants that make an impact in some places never gain a foothold in others. As a result, predicting which variants will surge to dominance is difficult, and staying on top of future variants and pathogens will require comprehensive, nearly real-time surveillance.

“We can gain a lot by looking at the viral genomic sequence and saying, ‘This one is probably worse than another one,’” Dr. Wertheim said. “But the only way to really know is to watch it spread, because there are a whole lot of potentially dangerous variants that never took hold.”

Here’s looking at Mu

The coronavirus is constantly changing, and most new variants never get noticed or named. But others raise alarms, either because they quickly become more common or because their genomes look ominous.

Both were true of Mu as it spread in Colombia. “It contained a couple of mutations that people had been watching very closely,” said Mary Petrone, a genomic epidemiologist at the University of Sydney and an author of the new Mu paper. Several of the mutations in its spike protein had been documented in other immune-evasive variants, including Beta and Gamma.

In the new study, which has not yet been published in a scientific journal, scientists compared Mu’s biological characteristics to those of Alpha, Beta, Delta, Gamma and the original virus. Mu did not replicate faster than any other variant, they found, but it was the most immune-evasive of the bunch — more resistant to antibodies than any known variant besides Omicron, Dr. Fauver said.

By analyzing the genomic sequences of Mu samples collected from all over the world, the researchers reconstructed the variant’s spread. They concluded that Mu had likely emerged in South America in mid-2020. It then circulated for months before it was detected.

Genomic surveillance in many parts of South America was “patchy and incomplete,” said Jesse Bloom, an expert in viral evolution at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle. “If there had been better surveillance in those regions, possibly it would have been easier to make a faster assessment of how worried to be about Mu.”

Mu presented another challenge, too. It happened to have a type of mutation, known as a frameshift mutation, that was rare in coronavirus samples. Such mutations were flagged as errors when scientists, including Dr. Fauver, tried to upload their Mu sequences to [GISAID](#), an international repository of viral genomes used to keep tabs on new variants.

That complication created delays in the public sharing of Mu sequences. The time that elapsed between when a virus sample was collected from a patient and when it was made publicly available on GISAID was consistently longer for Mu cases than for Delta cases, the researchers found.

“The genome itself was basically creating artificial surveillance gaps,” Dr. Fauver said. “It resulted, at least in our experience, in us not getting data out for weeks when normally we’re trying to get it out in days.”

(GISAID’s quality-control systems are important, the researchers stressed, and the repository has fixed the issue.)

Combine these surveillance gaps with Mu’s immune evasiveness and the variant seemed poised to take off. But that is not what happened. Instead, Mu radiated from South and Central America to other continents but did not circulate widely once it got there, the scientists found. “That was an indication that this variant was not as fit necessarily in maybe the North American and European populations as we had expected,” Dr. Petrone said.

That was likely because Mu found itself competing with an even more formidable variant: Delta. Delta was not as skilled at dodging antibodies as Mu, but it was more transmissible. “So, in the end, Delta spread more widely,” Dr. Bloom said.

Right variant, right time

Studying successful variants tells only half the story. “Variants that do not become dominant are, in a way, negative controls,” Dr. Petrone said. “They tell us what didn’t work, and, in doing so, help to fill in knowledge gaps around variant fitness.”

Delta overtook several immune-evasive variants besides Mu, including Beta, Gamma and Lambda. This pattern suggests that immune evasion alone was not enough to allow a variant to outdo a highly transmissible version of the virus — or at least it wasn’t during the early phase of the pandemic, when few people had immunity.

But vaccinations and multiple waves of infection have changed the immune landscape. A highly immune-evasive variant should now have more of an edge, scientists said, which is likely part of the reason Omicron has been so successful.

Another recent study suggested that in New York City immune-evasive Gamma [tended to do better](#) in neighborhoods with higher levels of pre-existing immunity, in some cases because they were hit hard in the first Covid wave. “We can’t view a new variant in a vacuum, because it comes about in the shadow of all of the variants that came before it,” said Dr. Wertheim, who was an author of the study.

Indeed, the clash of variants past reveals that success is highly dependent on context. For example, New York City may have been the birthplace of the Iota variant, which [was first detected](#) in virus samples collected in November 2020. “And so it got a foothold early on,” said Dr. Petrone. Even after the more transmissible Alpha variant arrived, Iota remained the city’s dominant variant for months, before eventually fading away.

But in Connecticut, where Iota and Alpha both appeared in January 2021, things unfolded differently. “Alpha just kind of took off immediately, and Iota didn’t stand a chance,” said Dr. Petrone, who led [a study of the variants in the two regions](#).

A similar pattern is already beginning to play out with Omicron’s multiple lineages. In the United States, BA.2.12.1, a subvariant first identified in New York, [has taken off](#), while in South Africa, [BA.4 and BA.5 are driving a new surge](#).

That’s another reason to study variants that waned, said Sarah Otto, an evolutionary biologist at the University of British Columbia. A variant that was poorly matched for a certain time and place could take off in another. Indeed, Mu’s misfortune might have simply been that it emerged too soon. “There might not have been enough people that had immunity to really give that variant a boost,” Dr. Otto said.

Return to Top	<p>But the next variant of concern could be a descendant of, or something similar to, an immune-evasive lineage that never quite took hold, she said.</p> <p>Looking back at previous variants can also provide insight into what worked — or didn't — in containing them. The new Gamma study, provides further evidence that international travel bans, at least as the United States implemented them, are unlikely to prevent a variant's global spread.</p> <p>Gamma was first identified in Brazil in late 2020. In May of that year, the United States barred most non-U.S. citizens from traveling into the country from Brazil, a restriction that remained in place until November 2021. Yet Gamma was detected in the United States in January 2021 and soon spread to dozens of states.</p> <p>Because Gamma never came to dominate worldwide, studying its spread provided a “cleaner” picture of the effectiveness of travel bans, said Tetyana Vasylyeva, a molecular epidemiologist at the University of California San Diego and an author of the study. “When it comes to studying variants like, let's say, Delta — something that has caused a major outbreak in every place — it is really difficult at times to find patterns, because it happens on a very large scale and very fast,” she said.</p> <p>In an ongoing global health emergency, with a virus that changes fast, there is an understandable impulse to focus on the future, Dr. Fauver said. And as the world's attention turned to Delta and then Omicron, he and his colleagues discussed whether to continue their study of old-news Mu.</p> <p>“We were like, ‘Does anyone care about Mu anymore?’” Dr. Fauver recalled. “But we think there's still room for high-quality studies that ask questions about previous variants of concern and try to look back on what happened.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/04 Belarus snap combat readiness drills
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/belarus-says-surprise-army-drills-no-threat-neighbours-tass-2022-05-04/
GIST	<p>May 4 (Reuters) - The armed forces of Belarus began sudden large-scale drills on Wednesday to test their combat readiness, the defence ministry of Ukraine's neighbour said.</p> <p>Belarus is a close ally of Russia, which invaded Ukraine in late February immediately after holding joint drills with Minsk which had allowed it to move more forces closer to the Ukrainian border. Russia calls its actions in Ukraine a "special military operation".</p> <p>"It is planned that the (combat readiness) test will involve the movement of significant numbers of military vehicles, which can slow down traffic on public roads," the Belarusian ministry said in a statement.</p> <p>The ministry said the exercise posed no threat to its neighbours or the European community in general.</p> <p>Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko spoke to his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Tuesday and the two discussed the Russian operation in Ukraine, among other issues, according to official statements.</p> <p>Areas of Ukraine adjacent to Belarus, including its capital Kyiv, came under Russian assault in the initial stage of the invasion, but now Russia has focused its attacks on Ukraine's eastern and southeastern regions.</p>

HEADLINE	05/03 Putin warns: can terminate exports, deals
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/putin-signs-decree-new-retaliatory-sanctions-against-west-kremlin-2022-05-03/

GIST

LONDON, May 3 (Reuters) - Russian President Vladimir Putin put the West on notice on Tuesday that he could terminate exports and deals, the Kremlin's toughest response yet to the sanctions burden imposed by the United States and allies over the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Putin, Russia's paramount leader since 1999, signed a broad decree on Tuesday which forbade the export of products and raw materials to people and entities on a sanctions list that he instructed the government to draw up within 10 days.

The decree, which came into force with its publication, gives Moscow the power to sow chaos across markets as it could at any moment halt exports or tear up contracts with an entity or individual it has sanctioned.

The Russian government has 10 days to draw up lists of those it will sanction beyond the Western politicians it has already.

Putin explicitly framed the decree as a response to what he cast as the illegal actions of the United States and its allies meant to deprive "the Russian Federation, citizens of the Russian Federation and Russian legal entities of property rights or the restricting their property rights".

The decree sets out "retaliatory special economic measures in connection with the unfriendly actions of some foreign states and international organizations".

Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine prompted the United States and its allies to impose the most severe sanctions in modern history on Russia and Moscow's business elite, steps Putin casts as a declaration of economic war.

The West's attempt to economically isolate Russia - one of the world's biggest producers of natural resources - has propelled the global economy into uncharted waters with soaring prices and warnings of food shortages.

Putin, 69, has repeatedly warned that Moscow will respond in kind, though until Tuesday the Kremlin's toughest economic response had been to cut off gas supplies to Poland and Bulgaria and demand a new payment scheme for European buyers of gas.

Tuesday's decree forbids the export of products and raw materials to people and entities that the Kremlin has sanctioned. It forbids any transactions with such people or entities - even under current contracts.

Putin tasked the government with drawing up the list of foreign individuals and companies to be sanctioned, as well as defining "additional criteria" for a number of transactions that could be subject to restrictions.

"This is a framework decree," said Tatiana Stanovaya, a non-resident scholar at Carnegie Moscow Center and founder of the R.Politik political analysis firm.

"Now all the specific lists should be developed by the government. That's the main thing and we need to wait for."

Since the West imposed sanctions on Russia, the \$1.8 trillion economy has been heading for its biggest contraction since the years following the 1991 break-up of the Soviet Union, amid soaring inflation.

A significant transfer of Russian assets has begun as the Russian state gains even more influence over the economy, many major Western investors - such as energy giants BP ([BP.L](#)) and Shell ([SHEL.L](#)) - exit, and oligarchs try to restructure their business empires.

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HEADLINE

05/04 Russia targeting supply Western arms

SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-business-europe-united-nations-evacuations-d5fead271f5bd1ff19196d9e52253079
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces pounded targets across Ukraine, taking aim at supply lines for foreign weapons in the west and intensifying an offensive in the east, as the European Union moved Wednesday to further punish Moscow for the war with a proposed ban on oil imports.</p> <p>The Russian military said Wednesday it used sea- and air-launched precision guided missiles to destroy electric power facilities at five railway stations across Ukraine, while artillery and aircraft also struck troop strongholds and fuel and ammunition depots.</p> <p>The defense minister said a steel mill in Mariupol — the last pocket of Ukrainian resistance in that city — was sealed off, a day after Russian troops began storming it.</p> <p>Ukrainian authorities, meanwhile, said attacks in the eastern Donbas region left 21 civilians dead.</p> <p>The flurry of attacks over the past day comes as Russia prepares to celebrate Victory Day on May 9, marking the Soviet Union’s defeat over Nazi Germany. This year the world is watching for signs of whether Russian President Vladimir Putin will use the occasion to declare a limited victory — or expand what he calls a “special military operation” to a wider war.</p> <p>While the Russian attacks were across a wide swath of the country, some were concentrated in and around Lviv, the western city close to the Polish border that been gateway for NATO-supplied weapons.</p> <p>Explosions were heard late Tuesday in the city, which has seen only sporadic attacks during the war and has become a haven for civilians fleeing the fighting elsewhere. The mayor said the strikes damaged three power substations, knocking out electricity in parts of the city and disrupting the water supply. Two people were wounded.</p> <p>The strikes on the train stations were meant to disrupt the delivery of Western weapons, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said, while the minister warned any such deliveries are legitimate targets.</p> <p>Sergei Shoigu told top military brass Wednesday that the West was “stuffing Ukraine with weapons.”</p> <p>Western weaponry pouring into Ukraine helped to blunt Russia’s initial offensive and seems certain to play a central role in the potentially decisive battle for Ukraine’s Donbas, where Russian-backed separatists have been battling Ukrainian forces since 2014. Moscow shifted its focus to the industrial region after failing to take Kyiv in the early weeks of the war.</p> <p>The governor of the eastern Donetsk region, which lies in the Donbas, said Russian attacks left 21 dead on Tuesday, the highest number of known fatalities since April 8, when a missile attack on the railway station in Kramatorsk killed at least 59 people.</p> <p>Russia has deployed a significant number of troops in the region and appears to be trying to advance in the northern Donbas, as they try to cut Ukrainian forces off, according to an assessment from the British Defense Ministry. However, Moscow’s push has been slow as Ukrainian fighters dig in and use long-range weapons to target the Russians.</p> <p>The U.S. believes Ukrainians in recent days pushed Russian forces about 40 kilometers (25 miles) east of Kharkiv, a northeastern city that lies outside the Donbas but is key to the offensive there.</p> <p>In another effort to consolidate their control in the east, Russian forces began storming the bombed-out steel mill in Mariupol on Tuesday, the city’s last pocket of resistance. The renewed push to take the mill came after scores of civilians were evacuated from the plant’s underground tunnels after enduring weeks of shelling.</p>

Shoigu said Wednesday that the fighters at the Azovstal steel mill have been “securely blocked” inside, while Russian forces continue to demand their surrender. The mill’s defenders have repeatedly refused to lay down their arms.

In addition to supplying weapons to Ukraine, Europe and the United States have sought to punish Moscow with sanctions. The EU’s top official called on the 27-nation bloc on Wednesday to ban Russian oil imports.

“We will make sure that we phase out Russian oil in an orderly fashion, in a way that allows us and our partners to secure alternative supply routes and minimizes the impact on global markets,” European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France.

The proposals need to be unanimously approved to take effect and are likely to be the subject of fierce debate. Hungary and Slovakia have already said they won’t take part in any oil sanctions, but von der Leyen didn’t elaborate on whether they would receive an exemption, which appears likely.

Von der Leyen also proposed that Sberbank, Russia’s largest bank, and two other major banks be disconnected from the SWIFT international banking payment system.

Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said authorities on Wednesday plan to continue efforts to evacuate civilians from the city of Mariupol and nearby areas if the security situation allows it.

Thanks to the evacuation effort over the weekend, 101 people — including women, the elderly, and 17 children, the youngest 6 months old — emerged from the bunkers under the Azovstal steelworks to “see the daylight after two months,” said Osnat Lubrani, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Ukraine.

One evacuee said she went to sleep at the plant every night afraid she wouldn’t wake up.

“You can’t imagine how scary it is when you sit in the bomb shelter, in a damp and wet basement, and it is bouncing and shaking,” 54-year-old Elina Tsybulchenko said upon arriving in the Ukrainian-controlled city of Zaporizhzhia, about 140 miles (230 kilometers) northwest of Mariupol.

It is unclear how many Ukrainian fighters are still inside, but the Russians put the number at about 2,000 in recent weeks, and 500 were reported to be wounded. A few hundred civilians also remained there, Vereshchuk, the deputy prime minister, said.

In his nightly video address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that by storming the steel mill, Russian forces violated agreements for safe evacuations. He said the prior evacuations are “not a victory yet, but it’s already a result. I believe there’s still a chance to save other people.”

Mariupol — and the plant in particular — has come to symbolize the human misery inflicted by the war. The Russians’ two-month siege of the strategic port has trapped civilians with little or no food, water, medicine or heat, as Moscow’s forces pounded the city into rubble.

The city’s fall would deprive Ukraine of a vital port, allow Russia to establish a land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014, and free up troops for fighting elsewhere in the Donbas.

Also Wednesday, Ukraine’s Interior Ministry said a crash in the western Rivne region killed 26 people and injured 12 more. The crash involved a bus, a van and a fuel truck, the report said. The bus was headed to Poland, which has been a key destination for Ukrainian refugees.

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HEADLINE	05/04 Ukraine villages: whispers of collaborators
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/04/ukraine-collaborators-chernihiv-fear-paranoia-villages/

IVANIVKA, Ukraine — Olena peered out from her bedroom window to see what looked like her neighbor, a tall man nicknamed Girovka, step out of a car with Russian markings and begin sending flares into the night sky from the side of the road. The next day, Russian tanks and armored vehicles emerged from the woods in a long column, descending on this small village about 60 miles south of the Russian border, along the same road.

Days later, after the Russian retreat from northern and central Ukraine, four investigators from the Security Service of Ukraine filed into 66-year-old Olena's living room. She told them what she'd seen and showed them the spot where Girovka had stood and fired the flares. Other neighbors told investigators Girovka had been seen walking to and from Ukrainian positions minutes before they were shelled by Russian forces.

No one in the village has seen the neighbor since.

"Maybe they did it for money?" Olena, whom The Washington Post is identifying only by her first name out of concern about possible retaliation against her, said of those suspected of collaborating with Russia. "They were promised something. I'm wondering how it is possible to sell your conscience and dignity. I don't know. I don't get it."

In small towns and villages across Ukraine that fell under Russian occupation in February and March and have since been liberated, the fog of war has been replaced by the fog of conspiracy and suspicion. Weeks later, citizens across the country speak in hushed tones about people who they believe sold out their neighbors and whether they might have done so willingly or under duress.

Ukraine's armed forces declined to share how many Ukrainians accused of collaborating with Russia have been identified or apprehended. The Associated Press reported that about 400 people in the Kharkiv region suspected of collaborating have been detained and could face prosecution under new laws that make any action aiding Russian forces that results in deaths of Ukrainians punishable by life in prison.

Dmytro Ivanov, deputy head of the Chernihiv regional civil-military administration, said security services are investigating cases of alleged collaborators marking Ukrainian positions with phosphorus, which can be identified from the sky and has helped Russians target artillery fire on Ukrainian positions. He said others led Russians to food and supply storehouses. In some cases, he said, collaborators had accepted food or cash from Russians in exchange for information.

"We assume these people are still here," Ivanov said. "Right now, special security services are working on it. Among locals, there are not that many cases, because communities here are strong and united more than ever before."

In villages northeast of Ukraine's Mykolaiv, a city of about 500,000 near the Black Sea coast, Russian occupiers were expelled after less than two weeks. But resentment and rumors of possible local collaborators remained.

In Pisky, which has some 800 residents, a man greeted Washington Post journalists by telling them that the town was full of "Ruscists" — a term Ukrainians have coined as shorthand for "Russian fascists." He said most locals here supported Viktor Yanukovich, the pro-Russian Ukrainian president who was ousted during the country's 2014 revolution.

In March, the invading soldiers made Pisky's school their base. People in the town still accuse the school's director of unlocking the doors for the Russians and passing information to them. The Post could not independently verify those allegations.

"When the Russians came, she was saying to them, 'Oh, we've been waiting for you for eight years so you could bring order!'" 70-year-old resident Marina Polyshuk said, raising her voice to mimic the woman.

"Then after they left, she said, 'Oh, I just misunderstood,'" Polyshuk said. "You live in Ukraine and you misunderstood? Come on."

In many cases, stories of alleged collaborators are less concrete. Rumors and accusations take on lives of their own as they are told by emotional locals who are often traumatized and can seem suspicious almost to the point of paranoia. Villagers in Berezanka, near Chernihiv, told The Post of an employee of the State Forest Resources Agency whose home was raided by Russian forces. They took multiple guns, acting on a tip received from a local collaborator, according to a commonly repeated local rumor. Other locals said it was actually the employee, Oleh Nechypurenko, who willingly offered his weapons to the Russians. He had been arrested by Ukrainian security agents, they said.

Nechypurenko, 50, said none of it was true. Visited by a reporter at home with his wife, son and two dogs, he said Russians had come and taken his only gun — a small-caliber hunting rifle — before leaving peacefully. He said Ukrainian police interviewed him later but did not take him into custody.

One thing struck him as peculiar, he said: The Russians visited only two homes on his street — the ones with registered firearms (Ukrainians are required to register all firearms with local authorities).

“I’m not sure who did it, but it looks like someone tipped them off,” Nechypurenko said.

In nearby Yahidne, a married couple who are in their 50s said Russian soldiers came straight to their home on entering the village, raiding their house and storage shed for cash, jewelry and other valuables. The Minenkos are considered wealthy in the village of about 300 people; they think the Russians had inside information about their status.

After raiding their home, Russian soldiers used the floor as a toilet before leaving, said Vitaliy Minenko, 58. Villagers who ventured into the streets were forced to sing the Russian national anthem and were threatened with death if they stopped singing, he said.

“The war showed who is who, the other side of personalities,” Minenko said of his neighbors. “Who we thought was good turned out to be bad. Who was angry became nice.”

Inside the school in Pisky, there was a poster praising local men and women who had served in the Ukrainian military, fighting in the country’s eastern Donbas region against Russian-backed separatists since 2014. Polyshuk’s son, Evhen Kostenyuk, was one of those pictured.

His service ended in 2017, and he said he didn’t know his picture and name were posted inside the school until Russian soldiers dragged him away from his mother’s home. They held him for 24 hours, beating him and torturing him, he said. Then they led him into a neighboring town’s forest and shot him, he said.

Kostenyuk said he dropped to the ground and kept still after the bullet entered his shoulder; it ended up grazing a lung but not killing him. The Russian troops apparently thought he was dead. They left him there, and when he heard the sound of car doors closing and then tires rolling away, he jumped up and eventually found a stranger who was willing to help, he said. The stranger helped him tie up his shoulder to stanch the bleeding, then drove him to a Ukrainian military checkpoint.

Polyshuk said the school director left town when the Russians did but has since returned.

“I told her that she won’t have a life after the war,” Polyshuk said. “I’ll strangle her with my own hands.”

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HEADLINE	05/04 World hunger to worsen: food prices higher
SOURCE	https://finance.yahoo.com/news/world-hunger-spiked-ukraine-war-080442198.html
GIST	(Bloomberg) -- The number of people going hungry surged by 25% last year and the toll is rising as the war in Ukraine sends food prices ever higher.

Conflicts in countries like Ethiopia and Afghanistan have worsened crises there, and economic shocks from the Covid-19 pandemic curbed food access in almost two dozen nations, the Global Network Against Food Crises said. Extreme weather, like severe drought in Madagascar, is also exacerbating the problem.

Almost 193 million people across 53 countries or territories suffered acute food insecurity in 2021, meaning their lack of meals posed an immediate threat to their lives or livelihoods, the international alliance said in a report. That's up from 155 million in 55 countries for the prior year, and a record in the six years since the report began. The outlook is expected to "deteriorate further" this year.

"The war in Ukraine is supercharging a three-dimensional crisis -- food, energy and finance -- with devastating impacts on the world's most vulnerable people, countries and economies," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in the report.

Ukraine is one of the world's top grain and vegetable-oil suppliers and the war is disrupting its harvests and exports. A gauge of world food prices has soared to a record -- eclipsing levels seen in 2008 and 2011 that contributed to global food crises -- piling pressure on governments from Sri Lanka to Peru. That's helping to spark a wave of protectionism as some exporters curb overseas crop sales to ensure local supplies.

The war will have "severe consequences" on global food security, as millions of Ukrainians are displaced and many import-dependent countries can't get staple crops or fertilizers from Ukraine and Russia, according to the report. The war is also hampering the global economic recovery from the pandemic.

Early data already indicate the food crisis is worsening. The number facing hunger this year will reach about 180 million in 41 of the countries surveyed last year, plus Cabo Verde. While there's no forecast yet for the remaining 12 nations, it represents an additional 5 million hungry people across the countries where there are already projections.

The food crises network was founded by the European Union, World Food Programme and UN's Food and Agriculture Organization in 2016.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Australia detects 3 new subvariants
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/04/three-new-covid-omicron-subvariant-australia-ba-2-12-1-ba4-ba5-detected
GIST	<p>Three new Omicron subvariants have reached Australia and health authorities say people who contract the virus should wait three months before getting their next Covid-19 vaccination.</p> <p>Assoc Prof Stuart Turville from the University of New South Wales' Kirby Institute says Omicron subvariants BA.2.12.1, BA.4 and BA.5 have been detected in the country.</p> <p>Authorities are warning this winter season is likely to see a spike in Covid-19 cases and flu as restrictions which have suppressed the circulation of both viruses are phased out.</p> <p>The latest advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation recommends people wait three months after a confirmed Covid-19 infection and then receive their next vaccine dose as soon as possible.</p> <p>The advice, issued last week, applies to all people and for all Covid-19 vaccines.</p> <p>Turville said the severity and transmissibility of the new Omicron subvariants had yet to be determined.</p> <p>The arrival of Omicron BA.1 and BA.2 were marked by their ability to significantly evade a previous antibody response through past infection and/or vaccination, but the impact was less severe.</p>

	<p>The new subvariants BA.4, BA.5 and BA2.12.1 are likely to displace BA.1 and BA.2 in Australia.</p> <p>“We will need to study this over time to see if their advantage is one of “fitness/transmissibility” and/or their ability to be more slippery to existing antibodies,” Turville said. “As with all variants, the key parameter to watch is disease severity and this data takes time to accumulate.</p> <p>“There is still a lot about this virus that is unknown and there are many paths it has the potential to take.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Faith in Seattle police at lowest point in 7yrs
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3456846/public-safety-survey-seattle-law-enforcement-lowest-point-seven-years/
GIST	<p>Faith in Seattle law enforcement is down to its lowest point in the last seven years, according to results published by Seattle University. For the first time since 2015, police legitimacy, broadly defined as a willingness to grant deference law enforcement, has dropped below a score of 50 on a 0-100 survey index.</p> <p>The survey publishes annual summary results of top public safety concerns, most prominent themes, and community perceptions from 2021 for Seattle, broken up in five precincts and all the neighborhoods within for more specific data.</p> <p>Jacqueline B. Helfgott, Ph.D. and William Parkin, Ph.D. put the results together with research done by Alexander Dvorsky (East and West Precincts), Shannon Christensen (North Precinct), and JT Melbourne (South and Southwest Precincts).</p> <p>Police capacity; property crime; homelessness; traffic safety; and community & public safety capacity were the top public safety concerns in that order.</p> <p>Found in the survey were city averages of police legitimacy (48.9), social cohesion (53.5), social control (42.0), social disintegration (39.1), fear of crime (43.1), fear of crime in the day (38.9), and fear of crime in the night (47.3).</p> <p>The East precinct had the lowest numbers across the board, charting an average score of 3.7 points below the city mean for the categories above. Police legitimacy in the East precinct was a city-low 41.9.</p> <p>“The story it tells us is that fear of crime decreased for the majority of people in Seattle,” said councilmember Lisa Herbold in response to the survey. “But data shows that communities of color and people experiencing homelessness are the people most impacted by crime in Seattle and I am concerned that their voices are often drowned out in surveys like this. The issues they face are real, and their voices must be centered as we build community safety to meet their needs and addresses those challenges equitably and effectively.”</p> <p>Pigeon Point is the lowest ranking neighborhood in Seattle for fear of crime, with a score of 30.7.</p> <p>Another survey was published by the King County Executive’s Office. Called the Reimagining Public Safety Survey, the results shared that residents want alternative options to an armed police officer when they call 911.</p> <p>More than a third of the responses said they would avoid calling 911 during an emergency, largely out of fear for the safety of the person who needed help.</p> <p>The survey also captured overall thoughts on Seattle’s police force. 76% of respondents said they believed police largely “act within the law,” but only 65% said cops use an “appropriate amount of force.”</p> <p>The county has promised to develop pilot programs based on their survey’s findings, but aren’t scheduled to roll out until “mid 2022.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 CIA chief in push to mend Saudi ties
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/cia-chief-met-saudi-crown-prince-last-month-in-push-to-mend-ties-11651588201?mod=hp_lead_pos5
GIST	<p>DUBAI—CIA Director William Burns made an unannounced trip to Saudi Arabia last month to meet with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, U.S. and Saudi officials said, as the Biden administration pushes to repair ties with a key Middle East security partner.</p> <p>The visit took place in mid-April in the coastal city of Jeddah, where the Saudi leadership spent much of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. While details of what the two men discussed weren't available, recent sources of U.S.-Saudi tension include oil production, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Iran nuclear deal and the war in Yemen.</p> <p>"It was a good conversation, better tone than prior U.S. government engagements," one American official said of the top U.S. spy's meeting with Prince Mohammed, who runs Saudi Arabia's daily affairs on behalf of his 86-year-old father, King Salman.</p> <p>Mr. Burns is a former deputy secretary of state who studied Arabic and held postings in the Middle East, as well as having prior experience in covert diplomacy. During the Obama administration, he helped lead secret talks with Iran that led to a multination accord in 2015 to limit Tehran's nuclear development in exchange for relief from economic sanctions.</p> <p>Mr. Burns traveled to Saudi Arabia with the relationship between Washington and Riyadh at its lowest point in decades, with then presidential candidate Joe Biden saying in 2019 that the kingdom should be treated like a pariah over human-rights issues such as the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. A secret U.S. intelligence assessment, released last year by Mr. Biden, determined that Prince Mohammed approved an operation to capture or kill Mr. Khashoggi, which led to his 2018 murder and dismemberment inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.</p> <p>Prince Mohammed has denied involvement in the killing and told Mr. Biden's national security adviser in September that he never wanted to discuss the matter again, The Wall Street Journal has reported. Since then, Saudi Arabia has rebuffed U.S. requests to pump more oil to tame prices and undercut Moscow's war finances, keeping in line with Russian interests.</p> <p>A spokeswoman for the Central Intelligence Agency declined to comment on Mr. Burns's travels. The Saudi authorities didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>Political fissures between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have deepened since Russia invaded Ukraine, senior officials from both governments have said. The risk for the U.S. is that Riyadh will align more closely with China and Russia, or at least remain neutral on issues of vital interest to Washington, as it has on Ukraine.</p> <p>The White House has previously reiterated that the U.S. is committed to supporting Saudi Arabia's territorial defense, and a Saudi official at the kingdom's Washington Embassy has said the relationship with the U.S. remains strong.</p> <p>Multiple U.S. officials have visited the kingdom repeatedly in the past year to try to heal the breach, with an eye to addressing Saudi concerns about security threats from Iran and the Houthi rebels that Iran backs in Yemen. Yet with Mr. Biden opposed to any broad concessions to the Saudis, the officials have acknowledged making only modest progress.</p> <p>Kirsten Fontenrose, who oversaw Gulf affairs at the National Security Council under former President Donald Trump, said the White House is trying to identify an administration official whom the Saudis will listen to.</p>

	<p>“They’re looking around for where the relationship is strongest and engaging there,” said Ms. Fontenrose, who is now a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank.</p> <p>Since taking over the nation’s spy agency last year, Mr. Burns has made at least 15 trips abroad, including a secret visit to Kabul last August to meet with the Taliban’s top figure. He has since played a key role in the Biden administration’s response to the war in Ukraine, visiting Russia last November to warn President Vladimir Putin of the consequences of an invasion.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 CDC urges masks on public transportation
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2022/05/03/cdc-masks-airplanes-public-transportation/
GIST	<p>Federal health officials on Tuesday repeated their recommendation that masks be worn on airplanes, buses and in other public transportation settings where large numbers of people congregate.</p> <p>Despite a federal judge’s order last month striking down the federal transportation mask mandate, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said masks continue to be an important tool for stopping the spread of the coronavirus.</p> <p>“CDC continues to recommend that all people — passengers and workers, alike — properly wear a well-fitting mask or respirator in indoor public transportation conveyances and transportation hubs to provide protection for themselves and other travelers in these high volume, mixed population settings,” CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said in a statement that accompanied the recommendation.</p> <p>Walensky said that while masks protect the wearer, they also help protect those who have not been vaccinated or who may be at an increased risk for severe covid-19.</p> <p>Tuesday’s reminder from the CDC came one day before the federal mandate’s expiration. The original mandate was put into place by President Biden shortly after he took office and extended several times. Before that, masks were required in various settings, including on airplanes, but there was no federal mechanism to enforce the rule.</p> <p>When they announced the most recent extension, federal health officials said they had hoped to use the additional time to assess the need for a mask requirement in transportation settings based on factors such as the risk of virus variants and trends in caseloads.</p> <p>But that plan was upended by U.S. District Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle of the Middle District of Florida, who tossed out the requirement, saying it exceeded the statutory authority of the CDC. The Justice Department then announced it would appeal the decision.</p> <p>In polls, Americans have been roughly split on the need for face coverings in public transportation settings.</p> <p>The seven-day national average number of coronavirus cases is up 23 percent compared with a week earlier, according to data compiled by The Washington Post, with hospitalizations up 3.6 percent. However, deaths from the virus have declined 14 percent.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Is leaking Supreme Court opinion a crime?
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/scotus-roe-v-wade-opinion-leak-legal-risk/
GIST	<p>THE LEAK OF a seismic draft opinion from the US Supreme Court that would overturn <i>Roe v. Wade</i> has somehow managed overnight to elicit roughly equal outpourings of anger from the right and left: The left has rallied to decry a decision that would overturn a 50-year-old cornerstone of reproductive rights. Conservatives, despite the historic victory the ruling would represent for their side, have meanwhile targeted their political outrage at a far more specific individual: the leaker.</p>

Just hours after [Politico published a draft](#) of the majority ruling written by Justice Samuel Alito calling the *Roe* decision "egregiously wrong from the start" and overruling that five-decade-old precedent, figures across the right issued a chorus of [calls](#) for the [investigation](#) and [prosecution](#) of the anonymous source of the "illegal" leak. CBS News went so far as to report—somewhat vaguely—that it [expects an investigation involving the FBI into the leak's source](#). And Chief Justice John Roberts has [opened an investigation](#) into the disclosure.

But all of that furor is undermined by an inconvenient legal truth: Leaking a Supreme Court decision doesn't actually seem to be a crime—at least not by any clear and undisputed definition. "Right now, it's unclear whether the leaker broke any law at all," says Trevor Timm, a First Amendment-focused lawyer and the executive director of the Freedom of the Press Foundation. "Even the people claiming this act is beyond the pale and the FBI must investigate haven't pointed to a definitive law this leaker allegedly broke."

Timm cites a [lengthy Twitter thread](#) published late Monday by the well-known UC Berkeley legal scholar Orin Kerr, who responded to the leak Monday night by pointing out that a Supreme Court draft doesn't meet any of the obvious criteria that would make it an illegal document to hand to a journalist: Most important, it's not classified, so leaking it doesn't open the leaker to prosecution under the Espionage Act. "As far as I can tell, there is no federal criminal law that directly prohibits disclosure of a draft legal opinion," Kerr [concluded](#).

Of course, if the source is someone who hacked into a computer of, say, a Supreme Court justice or law clerk—or swiped the paper off their desk—the leaker could be prosecuted with computer fraud and abuse or theft, Kerr points out. But otherwise, despite the historical rarity of Supreme Court leaks and the politically radioactive nature of this one, Kerr argues there's no slam-dunk argument to federally prosecute the leaker.

Instead, Kerr suggests that any federal prosecutor seeking to make a case against Politico's leaker might have to resort to a far shakier statute, known as 18 U.S.C. § 641. That broad statute forbids the theft or misuse of government-owned "things of value"—a broadly written law seemingly designed at a surface level to prevent embezzlement or graft by those with access to the government's property. But whether it applies to information—and what kind of information, given to whom—remains an open question in federal law, with different circuit courts fundamentally disagreeing in their rulings.

"Legal scholarship provides little clarity regarding § 641's interpretation; only a few scholars have even recognized § 641's application to information," reads a [Columbia Law Review article](#) about the statute's use for prosecuting leakers, written by Jessica Lutkenhaus, an attorney focused on criminal defense at the law firm Wilmer Hale. "The circuits disagree about whether § 641 applies to information, and, if it does, what its scope is: What information constitutes a 'thing of value'?"

Sharing information is arguably fundamentally different from stealing "a thing of value," Freedom of the Press Foundation's Timm points out. "You can't steal a government Jeep or take something tangible or physical from government offices," Timm says. "But copying something can be construed as different from stealing something. You copy it, and the original thing is still there, and you just leave with papers that didn't exist before."

That ambiguity has led different federal courts to come to contradictory conclusions. A Fourth Circuit court, for instance, found in 1991 that a Department of Defense employee who left the DOD for a job at a defense contractor and took information with him was guilty of violating § 641. But a Ninth Circuit court has come to an opposite conclusion, finding in a 1959 case that "intangible" goods are not covered by § 641. That ruling was later applied in 1988 by the same circuit to the case of an information leaker, a naval officer accused of stealing computer punch cards related to secret encryption information. The court confirmed that the information itself was not covered by § 641—though his appeal was thrown out anyway because he'd stolen the physical punch cards that stored it.

	<p>Other circuit courts have come to conclusions somewhere in between, with some finding, for instance, that the § 641 <i>does</i> apply to information leaks but noting that this doesn't extend to those covered by the First Amendment's protections on free speech and freedom of the press—findings with direct relevance to Politico's Supreme Court leaker.</p> <p>Several of the most notable leakers in history have been charged under 18 U.S.C. § 641, too, including Daniel Ellsberg, Chelsea Manning, and Edward Snowden. But the use of that law was overshadowed by their prosecution under the Espionage Act, since all three were accused of leaking classified secrets, and none set a clear precedent. Ellsberg's charges were dropped due to improper government conduct by the Nixon administration, and Snowden has yet to face trial. Manning was convicted on the 18 U.S.C. § 641 count she faced, but in a military court, not a civilian one.</p> <p>All of that leaves the legal status of Politico's leaker—if they are identified—far from certain. But any confident argument that they committed a crime is on equally shaky terrain, argues Timm. And that's especially true in a case where the leaker appears to have leaked a document directly to the press, with a clear interest in making the information public.</p> <p>"Even if prosecutors think 18 U.S.C. § 641 applies, I'd have serious First Amendment concerns with broadly applying it to anyone who leaks a government document to the press," Timm says. "Leaks to the press are as American as apple pie. And, in many cases throughout history, have furthered democracy rather than hindered it."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Subvariant poised to become dominant
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/science/2022/05/omicron-subvariant-ba-2-12-1-now-36-5-of-us-cases-can-evade-ba-1-antibodies/
GIST	<p>The omicron subvariant BA.2.12.1 is poised to become dominant in the US, currently accounting for an estimated 36.5 percent of all US SARS-CoV-2 cases, according to the latest estimates released Tuesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>The subvariant's ascent is the latest rapid succession of omicron subvariants, from the sky-scraping peak of cases from the initial omicron subvariant BA.1 in January, to the current bump driven by the subvariant BA.2, which achieved dominance in March. As before, the reason for the viral usurping is that omicron subvariants continue to evolve advantages: BA.2.12.1 has a transmission advantage over BA.2, which had a transmission advantage over BA.1, which had a significant advantage over delta.</p> <p>The imminent reign of BA.2.12.1 raises concern for yet another wave of infections and poses questions about how effective future omicron-specific vaccines could be against symptomatic infections.</p> <p>The good news, so far, is that current vaccines are still strongly protecting against severe COVID-19, and BA.2.12.1 does not appear to cause more severe disease than BA.1 or BA.2—though the CDC and other health experts are actively monitoring this. However, the subvariant seems able to evade immune protections, particularly those from prior BA.1 infections.</p> <p>Evasion In preliminary data posted online Monday, researchers in Beijing found that BA.2.12.1 showed "strong neutralization evasion" against antibodies from vaccinated people who had also had breakthrough BA.1 infections. In the study, participants had been vaccinated with Sinovac's CoronaVac vaccine, an inactivated whole virus vaccine, which had about 50 percent efficacy in early observational studies in Brazil. (mRNA-based vaccines demonstrated efficacy rates around 95 percent in initial clinical trials.)</p> <p>The researchers looked at neutralizing antibodies from 50 people who had received three CoronaVac doses and recovered from a BA.1 infection. Comparing neutralizing antibody levels over a range of coronavirus variants, researchers found that neutralizing antibody levels against BA.2 were about 1.86 times lower than they were for BA.1. But, things got worse as researchers moved on to newer subvariants: Neutralizing</p>

antibody levels were 3.73 times lower for BA.2.12.1, compared with BA.1, and eight times lower against BA.4 and BA.5.

The latter finding echoes that of preliminary data out of South Africa, which [Ars reported Monday](#). There, researchers found that in unvaccinated people who had recovered from a BA.1 infection, neutralizing antibody levels were 7.6 fold and 7.5 fold lower against BA.4 and BA.5, respectively, compared with levels against BA.1. While vaccination with either a Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine or a J&J vaccine narrowed the gap in neutralizing antibody levels, researchers still saw a loss in protection: 3.6 fold and 2.6 fold lower neutralizing antibody levels against BA.4 and BA.5, respectively, compared with BA.1.

Together, the data all point to the possibility of more reinfections from newer omicron subvariants, particularly in people who are unvaccinated or not up to date on their vaccinations. This could drive yet more waves of infections in the US and around the world—though experts don't expect another towering wave like the BA.1 surge in January.

Concerns

It also raises concerns about the designs of second-generation vaccines—some of which may target BA.1, at least in part. For instance, last month, [Moderna, announced that it believed a bivalent vaccine](#)—targeting two version of the virus in one shot—would be a winning strategy to provider broader, longer-lasting protection.

"Our latest bivalent booster candidate, mRNA-1273.214, which combines the currently authorized Moderna COVID-19 booster with our [BA.1] omicron-specific booster candidate, remains our lead candidate for the fall 2022 Northern Hemisphere booster," Moderna CEO Stéphane Bancel said in a statement at the time.

But, the new data suggests BA.1-based vaccines may offer weak protection against BA.2, BA.4, BA.5, and any other omicron subvariants down the line.

"Unlike when omicron first appeared, now omicron sublineages have started to target the humoral immunity [antibodies and other adaptive responses] induced by omicron itself, including the humoral immunity induced by post-vaccination omicron infection," the authors of the new study from Beijing write. "This poses a great challenge" to establishing protection and "suggests that omicron BA.1-based vaccine may not be the ideal antigen for inducing broad-spectrum protection against emerging omicron sublineages."

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HEADLINE	05/03 Cuba migrants arrive record high on foot
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/03/world/americas/cuban-migration-united-states.html
GIST	<p>Cuban migrants are arriving to the United States in the highest numbers seen in four decades, with about 150,000 expected to arrive this year, according to senior American officials, as the economic and political situation on the island grows more desperate.</p> <p>For decades, Cubans trying to flee repression, food insecurity and economic devastation boarded rickety boats, risking their lives to get to American shores.</p> <p>Now they are coming in record numbers, but this time on foot, their flight aided by Nicaragua, which dropped visa requirements late last year for Cubans, giving them a toehold in Central America to journey overland through Mexico to the United States. American officials have accused Nicaragua's authoritarian president, Daniel Ortega, of enacting the policy to pressure the United States to drop sanctions on his country.</p> <p>The surge in Cubans trying to cross the southern border represents just a portion of migrants who have at times overwhelmed border officials as undocumented crossings continue to rise under the Biden</p>

administration. March set a record for the number of people caught crossing illegally in a single month in two decades: 221,303.

Since October — the start of the federal government’s 2022 fiscal year — nearly 79,000 Cubans have arrived at the United States’ southern border, more than in the previous two years combined, according to Customs and Border Protection figures. In March, more than 32,000 Cubans arrived at the border, most of them flying first to Nicaragua then traveling overland to the United States, according to a senior State Department official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of ongoing dialogue with the Cuban government.

The official said visa-free travel to Nicaragua was encouraging migrants to spend their life savings to pay smugglers for the journey, and added that some were falling prey to trafficking by criminal groups.

The numbers are the highest since the [Mariel boatlift in 1980, when 125,000 Cubans migrated](#) to the United States after the island nation opened its seaports to American vessels to evacuate anyone who wanted to leave.

Public discontent in Cuba has been simmering since mass protests erupted last summer across the country over escalating inflation, chronic food and drug shortages and ongoing power outages. During the Obama administration, the United States eased restrictions on travel and remittances to Cuba significantly, but they were resurrected under former President Donald J. Trump, dealing a harsh economic blow.

The demonstrations caught the Communist government by surprise and it has responded by imposing one of the biggest crackdowns in decades. More than 700 Cubans have been [charged for taking part in protests](#), including some teenagers who received 30 years in prison.

The deteriorating political and economic conditions are feeding the growing exodus.

Nicaragua’s government dropped its Cuba visa requirement [in November](#), opening a land route for migrants reluctant to embark on the dangerous sea journey to American shores. Since then the number of flights to Managua from Havana have soared.

“I think we are seeing governments try to weaponize migration because they know it causes political disruptions in receiving countries,” said Andrew Selee, the president of the Migration Policy Institute, a research institute in Washington.

Mr. Selee and other analysts said Nicaragua was likely using Cuban migrants to press the United States to lift sanctions on Mr. Ortega and his inner circle. The move has been compared to [Belarus dropping visa requirements for Iraqis](#) last year to facilitate their entry into the European Union, in retaliation for sanctions the bloc had levied on Belarus for its disputed election.

“They’re not fools,” Mr. Selee said. “The government in Managua knew that this would force the U.S. to come to the bargaining table at some point.” Still, it is unclear if the looser migration rules would yield any changes in U.S. policy.

Nicaragua’s government did not respond to questions sent by The Times. Cuba’s government did not respond to requests for comment.

Many Cubans are desperate to leave, even if it means going into debt to go on a perilous journey. Cubans describe selling whatever they have — homes, clothing and furniture — and taking loans with steep interest rates to raise the thousands of dollars they need to get to the United States, even though the average salary on the island is about \$46 a month.

Zenen Hernández, 35, was one of 414 Cubans who crossed the Rio Grande into the United States on April 5, out of a total of 1,488 undocumented migrants who crossed that section of the Texas border (about 245 miles) that day.

“Food and medicine are scarce,” Mr. Hernández said, describing conditions in Cuba. “It’s only poverty.” The Cuban government blames the United States’ decades-long embargo of the nation for its economic woes.

The economy there was dismal before the pandemic hit, but Mr. Hernández scraped by, selling bread and chips. By the summer of 2020, the situation had become untenable. When Nicaragua opened its borders to Cubans, he decided it was time to go.

“I had to sell my house,” he said.

The cost was steep: \$16,000 for the flight to Nicaragua and the ensuing 1,800-mile trek to reach the United States — often on foot — through the jungles, mountains and rivers of Central America and Mexico.

Along the way, migrants are routinely threatened and extorted by the police and preyed upon by criminal organizations that kidnap and beat them for ransom.

When Mr. Hernández was asked to describe his trip, he choked up recalling the miserable journey. “I don’t have words,” he said. “They rob you — the police, the smugglers. They rob you.”

Pent-up demand for legal crossings is another factor increasing migration. In 2017, the Trump administration slashed staffing at the United States Embassy in Cuba after a series of unexplained health problems that became known as “[Havana syndrome](#)” affected American personnel there.

The drawdown forced Cubans to apply for visas from the American embassy in Guyana, a trip too expensive for many. The move also prevented the United States from upholding its commitment to provide 20,000 immigrant visas to Cubans annually, part of a 1994 agreement between the countries to provide a legal pathway and discourage illegal migration.

This week, the United States Embassy in Havana will hold the first interviews for immigrant visa applicants since 2017, one of the senior American officials said.

The first high-level talks between Cuba and the United States since 2018 took place in late April, focused on restoring regular migration channels. The Cuban government asked the United States to uphold the agreement to issue 20,000 immigrant visas annually; the American government requested that Havana start accepting Cuban deportees who have arrived illegally.

The American official said the two sides would likely meet again in six months.

“If the talks are successful, they will get back to a formula that worked before, providing a real, feasible legal channel for Cubans to come to the U.S. in exchange for the deportation of those who don’t use the legal channel,” said Mr. Selee, of the Migration Policy Institute. “Migration is a rare point of cooperation between the countries that has really worked.”

For decades, Cubans who migrated to the United States enjoyed preferential treatment. Those caught at sea were turned back but those who reached U.S. soil were allowed to stay, under a policy commonly referred to as “wet-foot, dry-foot.” President Obama ended the policy in 2017.

The bilateral talks came ahead of the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles in June, where countries will try to agree on a regional framework for migration and shore up financial support for Latin American countries with large migrant populations. Colombia received \$800 million last year in loans from multilateral lenders, including the World Bank, to support the 1.7 million Venezuelan migrants it hosts, the type of support the summit will look to extend throughout the region.

Although the Biden administration has maintained that only democratic governments will be invited to the summit, Cuba was invited to the previous two, in 2015 and 2018, and is hoping for an invitation this year.

	<p>But American officials said that was yet to be decided, sparking ire from the Cuban government.</p> <p>“The United States resorts once again to all kinds of resources and lies to assert the right won by Cuba and its people to be present at these Summits on an equal footing with the rest of the countries in the region,” Cuba’s foreign minister, Bruno Rodriguez, tweeted on April 25. This is “something shameful.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 West adds support, arms for Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/03/world/europe/russia-ukraine-western-support.html
GIST	<p>ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine — President Biden spoke in an Alabama factory that built the Javelin missiles Ukrainian soldiers used against Russian tanks. Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain addressed members of Ukraine’s Parliament, extolling their “finest hour.” President Emmanuel Macron of France pressed Russia’s Vladimir V. Putin by phone to end his “devastating aggression.” Germany helped Finland and Sweden — Russia’s Nordic neighbors once wary of provoking Mr. Putin — inch closer to joining NATO.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the leaders of the West sought to capitalize on Russia’s apparent lack of battlefield momentum to show Ukraine support and strengthen its resolve — and its arsenal.</p> <p>“You have exploded the myth of Putin’s invincibility and you have written one of the most glorious chapters in military history and in the life of your country,” Mr. Johnson told President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine and the country’s lawmakers in a video address, the first by a foreign leader to Ukraine’s Parliament.</p> <p>He announced that Britain would provide a roughly \$375 million package of additional weapons to Ukraine, including electronic warfare gear, a radar system and GPS-jamming equipment. And he compared Ukraine’s defense to Britain’s resistance to the Nazi onslaught in World War II. “This is Ukraine’s finest hour,” he said.</p> <p>That display of determination, whether choreographed or coincidental, came as the European Union, often splintered by political and ideological faults, moved toward a united embargo against Russian oil, as the Pentagon described Russia’s offensive in eastern Ukraine’s Donbas region as “anemic” and “plodding,” and as British intelligence experts issued damning new assessments of Russian military capabilities.</p> <p>Still, for Ukrainian civilians, Russian firepower seemed all too effective.</p> <p>In the ruined city of Mariupol, Russian troops renewed shelling of the battered Azovstal steel plant and the 200 civilians still ensconced there, even as about 130 evacuees arrived to relative safety in Zaporizhzhia about 140 miles west and spoke in horror about two months in the bunkers under perpetual fire.</p> <p>Russian missiles struck power substations in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, knocking out some electricity, the mayor, Andriy Sadovyi, reported on Twitter. At least nine people were killed by Russian strikes in the eastern region of Donetsk, including three civilians fetching water, according to its governor, Pavlo Kyrylenko.</p> <p>Mr. Biden spoke in Alabama about how the “United States alone has committed more than 5,500 Javelins to Ukraine,” and how the Lockheed Martin missile factory workers were empowering Ukrainians to defend themselves in a battle “between autocracy and democracy.” But for all that talk, the war, now in its third month, increasingly felt like a protracted struggle.</p> <p>U.S. officials warned that Russia had plans to annex the separatist territories of Donetsk and Luhansk in the east, and the Kherson region in the south. The Russians would likely use “sham” elections to claim control, said Michael Carpenter, the American ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.</p>

Some analysts wondered why Russia had not targeted Ukrainian railways and other infrastructure to stop Western weapons from reaching the front, or bombed the symbols of Ukraine's institutions or hit the West with cyberattacks. The reason could simply be incompetence. But Mr. Putin, far from chastened, might soon upgrade what he has called the "special military operation" in Ukraine to a war, providing a justification to expand the fight and use military conscripts.

The West, Mr. Putin said Tuesday in his call with Mr. Macron, should stop supplying weapons to Ukraine, as they were contributing to "atrocities." Peace seemed far out of reach, with Mr. Putin accusing Ukraine of an "unwillingness" to negotiate seriously, according to a Kremlin description of the call.

But American military and political leaders, once apprehensive about goading Mr. Putin into an escalation, in recent days have explicitly stated a goal of weakening the Russian military and Mr. Putin's ability to invade other countries.

If some European officials have worried that such language could play into Mr. Putin's propaganda that his invasion of Ukraine is a defensive maneuver against NATO expansion, provoking Mr. Putin no longer seemed such a major concern.

In Brussels, Prime Minister Mario Draghi of Italy said the Russian aggression had called into question the "greatest achievement of the European Union: peace within our continent." He said Russia had violated that peace and basic respect for human rights "in Mariupol, in Bucha, and in all the places where the Russian army unleashed its violence against unarmed civilians."

Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany promised to back NATO membership for Sweden and Finland, which have suggested they want to join.

"They can count on our support," Mr. Scholz said at a joint news conference with the Finnish and Swedish leaders.

"There is no going back," Prime Minister Sanna Marin of Finland said. "We see now more clearly where Russia wants to take us: It is a world of spheres of influence where the stronger has the last word."

Those political assertions of strength have found fuel in Russia's setbacks on the battlefield. Before Mr. Johnson addressed Ukraine's Parliament, an intelligence update by the British Defense Ministry assessed that "failures in both strategic planning and operational execution" had led Russia's military to become "significantly weaker" since the Feb. 24 invasion — even after having doubled its defense budget from 2005 through 2018.

The report asserted that Russia's military failures, combined with international sanctions, would have "a lasting impact" on the ability of Russian forces to recover for some time.

And while Russia struggled to make progress in Ukraine, a string of unexplained explosions and fires in southern Russia continued into Tuesday, with a blast rattling the city of Belgorod. Russian officials have in some instances blamed Ukrainians for the explosions. The Ukrainian government has a formal policy of neither confirming nor denying strikes inside Russia.

On Monday, a railroad bridge in the Kursk region of Russia was destroyed in what the regional governor called sabotage. A series of suspicious fires erupted in different parts of the country. In Moscow, a fire engulfed the sprawling warehouse of a textbook company that had sought to expunge "Ukraine" references from its pages. Arkady R. Rotenberg, a close friend and former judo partner of Mr. Putin, who became a billionaire during his administration, is chairman of the company.

At least a dozen suspicious fires have broken out inside Russia recently, many of them at fuel depots near the border with Ukraine. Some have been deeper inside Russia, including at a military research institute near Moscow.

Return to Top	<p>But Ukrainians, and civilians in particular, are bearing the brunt of the war.</p> <p>Russia said its cruise missiles had hit a logistics center at a military airfield near Odesa. In a statement on Tuesday, the country's Defense Ministry said the strike had destroyed hangars housing Bayraktar TB2 drones, as well as missiles and ammunition from the United States and Europe.</p> <p>On Tuesday, in a rare but limited victory for diplomacy, a fleet of buses, flanked by white United Nations and Red Cross SUVs, passed checkpoints and Russian-controlled territory and carried to Ukrainian-controlled territory nearly 130 women and children who for weeks had sheltered in the belly of the sprawling steel works in Mariupol. Once a vivacious Ukrainian port city, it has become a ruin of rubble and corpse-strewn streets from incessant Russian bombing.</p> <p>But on Tuesday at the steel plant, almost immediately after international negotiators departed with evacuees, Russian forces struck buildings where civilians were still sheltering, according to a statement on Telegram by the Azov regiment, whose fighters are inside the plant. The Mariupol mayor, Vadym Boychenko, said more than 200 civilians remained trapped in bunkers beneath the factory and that 100,000 civilians remained in the city.</p> <p>Aid workers greeted the Azovstal evacuees in a shopping complex in Zaporizhzhia, offering tea and snacks after they had subsisted on expired Russian rations heated on wood fires.</p> <p>"I was in Azovstal for two and a half months and they slammed us from all sides," said Olga Savina, an elderly woman, as she emerged from a white bus. She said the sun burned her eyes after so many days underground.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 US abortion rate at historic low
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/3/roe-v-wade-outcry-comes-us-abortion-rate-historic/
GIST	<p>Liberal alarm in the U.S. over the future of Roe v. Wade may have never been higher, thanks to the leak of a Supreme Court draft opinion this week, but the nation's abortion rate since the 1973 case was decided has never been lower.</p> <p>After peaking in 1980 at 29.3 procedures per 1,000 women, the U.S. abortion rate has steadily declined. In 2019, it fell to a historic low of 11.4, below the 13.5 per 1,000 women in 1973, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a November report.</p> <p>From 2010 through 2019, the number of reported abortions fell by 18% from 762,755 to 629,898, while the population increased by about 20 million. The abortion rate dropped by 21% among women ages 15 to 44.</p> <p>"You're more likely to know a married gay couple than to know someone who has had an abortion," conservative radio host Erick Erickson said in a Tuesday post.</p> <p>The decades-long decline belied some of the messaging on both ends of the political spectrum, including repeated warnings by pro-choice advocates that a rollback of Roe v. Wade would trigger a "humanitarian crisis" and conservative fears that Roe's recognition of a constitutional right to abortion would send demand for the procedure on an ever-upward trajectory.</p> <p>"The gutting of Roe v. Wade will result in a severe public health and human rights crisis with grave repercussions for the health, well-being and rights of women, girls and pregnant people, including the criminalization of pregnant people seeking abortions and the increased rates of pregnancy-related deaths," Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health said in a Tuesday statement.</p>

The CDC report uses figures from the 47 states and reporting areas, which include New York City. California, Maryland and New Hampshire did not report data from 2010-2019, meaning the actual total is undoubtedly higher.

Ryan Bomberger, a co-founder of the pro-life Radiance Foundation, said that “low is a really relative term because you’re still talking about over 800,000 innocent human beings being killed.”

Even with the “dramatic declines” in procedure rates, the pro-choice Guttmacher Institute said in a 2017 study that abortion remains a “common experience.” It concluded that 23.7% of American women would have an abortion by age 45.

“Despite recent declines in abortion, it is still a common procedure, and nearly one in four U.S. women will have an abortion in her lifetime,” said Guttmacher researcher Rachel Jones, lead author of the analysis.

The theories for the fall-off range from better birth control methods and sharply falling teen pregnancy rates since the 1950s to the expansion of pro-life pregnancy centers that help expectant mothers. Interestingly, Guttmacher found in 2017 that state laws limiting access to abortion were not the primary reason for the decline.

“Abortion restrictions were not the main driver of the decline in the U.S. abortion rate between 2011 and 2017,” the study said. “Rather, the decline in abortions appears to be related to declines in births and pregnancies overall.”

Another trend: the greater availability of medical abortions, or abortion pills. In February, Guttmacher said the pills for the first time were used to terminate more than half, or 54%, of unwanted pregnancies, fueled in part by social restrictions brought on by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

The two-drug combination has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration for up to 10 weeks of gestation.

Teen abortions tumble

Those who do undergo abortions are more likely to be unmarried and in their 20s as the average age trends upward.

The 2019 CDC report found that 56.4% of abortions were for women in their 20s, with those ages 20 to 24 undergoing most of those procedures, or 34%. More than 85% of those obtaining abortions were unmarried.

Meanwhile, the teen abortion rate has dropped sharply. In 2014, girls and women ages 15 to 19 accounted for 12% of all procedures.

“The abortion rate among adolescents declined 46% between 2008 and 2014, the steepest decline of any demographic group over this period,” the Guttmacher report said.

Women who undergo abortions are also more likely to be Black, not just as a percentage of the population, but also in absolute numbers.

In 2019, Black women received 132,878 abortions, or 38.4%, of the total. That was more than non-Hispanic White women, who came in second at 33.4%, according to CDC figures for the District of Columbia and 29 states that report by race and ethnicity.

The large percentage of Black women undergoing procedures has long rankled the pro-life movement, which has accused leading abortion providers such as Planned Parenthood of targeting Black and minority communities. Planned Parenthood argues that it provides health care to underserved areas.

Hispanic women made up 21% of abortion recipients, slightly above their 18.7% share of the population, while “other” made up 7.2%. Women of all races have seen their abortion rates fall.

“Between 2008 and 2014, women of color experienced the steepest abortion rate declines: Rates fell 32% to 39% among Hispanic and Black women and those who identified with a race other than Black or White, compared with a 14% decline among White women,” the Guttmacher study said.

The vast majority of abortions, or 92.7%, occur in the first 13 weeks of pregnancy, according to CDC data from 43 states or reporting areas. The 2018 Mississippi law that spurred the Supreme Court challenge bans most abortions after 15 weeks. Many Western countries with more permissive abortion laws set a limit of 12 weeks after conception.

Only 2.9% of abortions were performed between the 13th to the 15th week of the pregnancy, while 1% came at 21 weeks or later.

Most women who receive abortions are also poor. Those with incomes below 100% of the federal poverty line had the highest abortion rate among all income groups at 36.6% per 1,000 women, Guttmacher said.

“Abortion has become increasingly concentrated among poor women, who accounted for 49% of patients in 2014,” the Guttmacher study said.

Polls show that most Americans believe abortion should be legal, but pro-life advocates argue that opinion has trended in their direction, citing surveys showing that most people also favor some restrictions.

In 1995, 56% of Americans identified themselves as pro-choice versus 33% who considered themselves pro-life, but in the past few years, the two sides have been virtually tied, according to the Gallup poll.

“Opinion has shifted, despite the fact that the majority of mainstream media has basically been doing radical abortion advocacy,” Mr. Bomberger said. “It’s hard to imagine that we’re actually breaking through, but public opinion has changed.”

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HEADLINE	05/03 US: China’s pro-Moscow disinformation
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/3/state-department-targets-chinas-pro-moscow-disinfo/
GIST	<p>Chinese “wolf warrior” diplomats and state-controlled media actively promote the Russian government’s line and disinformation on the Ukraine war, contrary to Beijing’s claim of being a neutral party toward the conflict, the State Department charged this week.</p> <p>The ruling Communist Party and government “routinely amplify Kremlin propaganda, conspiracy theories and disinformation,” the department said in a report. “This amplification rationalizes [Russian] President [Vladimir] Putin’s unjustified and unprovoked war against Ukraine while undermining trust in the United States and other countries, democratic institutions and independent media.”</p> <p>It is the first time the State Department, through its counterdisinformation unit known as the Global Engagement Center, produced a detailed assessment of anti-U.S. disinformation and propaganda by China. The report, first made public Monday, also included an illustration highlighting the Beijing-Moscow coordination with tweets from the Russian Foreign Ministry repeated in the Communist Party-affiliated Global Times.</p> <p>Party and government-controlled media are using social media platforms banned in China and directing diplomats to promote Russian talking points to global audiences in multiple languages in the campaign, U.S. officials say. At the same time, Chinese state media censor credible reports on Russian military atrocities in Ukraine, such as the killings and bombings of civilians.</p>

China's official media campaign strongly backs the Kremlin's assertion that NATO expansion and Western aggression sowed the seeds for the war. It rejects Western condemnation that the Ukraine invasion was a "war of choice" for Mr. Putin, even while proclaiming official neutrality.

"The 'pro-Russia neutrality' of PRC officials avoids explicit public endorsement or condemnation of Russia's invasion of and conduct in Ukraine, and continues to insist Beijing is a neutral stakeholder that respects the 'sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations,'" said the report, using the acronym for the People's Republic of China. "However, PRC and [Chinese Communist Party] media and officials' further uncritical amplification of Moscow's messaging demonstrates Beijing's support for Russia."

A Chinese Embassy spokesman did not immediately respond to an email request for comment.

According to the report, the Chinese disinformation campaign presents unverified information and claims drawn directly from Russian state-run media and officials. The disinformation is amplified as part of what the report called a "feedback loop" of Russian state-controlled media outlets that reference the Chinese government and state media, claiming Russia's position is widely supported.

Chinese social media, such as the Twitter-like platform Weibo, and large-scale state propaganda outlets such as the People's Daily and Global Times, favorably report on the preferred Russian narratives.

At the same time, the Chinese are "heavily censoring and editing" comments by U.S. and other officials in democratic states and in independent news outlets on the Ukraine conflict and reports of Russian military forces' atrocities.

Censors also are blocking Ukraine war critics within China.

Key players in the disinformation operation are called "wolf warriors." These Chinese government officials, diplomats and party spokespeople aggressively promote the government's positions. Among the most well-known is Deputy Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian. Mr. Zhao was the first Chinese official in 2020 to begin spreading the unsubstantiated charge that the COVID-19 pandemic started with a virus created in the U.S. military laboratory. International public health experts say the virus began in Wuhan, China, in 2019, either in a laboratory or a wild animal market.

Mr. Zhao has been busy in recent days amplifying Russia's case in the Ukraine conflict.

"My colleagues and I have repeatedly pointed out that the conflict may appear to be a conflict between Russia and Ukraine, but in fact, it is one between Russia and the U.S.-led NATO," he told reporters Tuesday.

The State Department report said "PRC 'wolf warrior' diplomats boost Kremlin narratives by amplifying and reposting content from fringe media outlets and anti-NATO and anti-U.S. influencers who align with Beijing's narratives. Frequently, this content appears in PRC, [Communist Party] and Kremlin propaganda."

Before Russian military forces invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, Chinese propaganda outlets joined Russian state media in labeling reports of an impending military attack as "disinformation" and "information terrorism." Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Foreign Affairs Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova had used the same terms.

Since the invasion, Chinese media have conspicuously declined to label the unprovoked invasion as "war" and often echo Mr. Putin's preference for calling the conflict a "special military operation." Chinese commentators also engage in what the State Department report called "what-aboutism" rhetoric designed to redirect animosity toward the United States, NATO and the West.

In March, Chinese information operations targeted the report's "heavy amplification" of Russian propaganda regarding U.S.-sponsored laboratories in Ukraine. Mr. Zhao, the Foreign Ministry deputy

spokesman, began amplifying Russian charges that the laboratories were engaged in biological weapons work, which U.S. and Ukrainian officials staunchly denied.

The Chinese spokesman specifically cited as a source Dilyana Gaytandzhieva, described in the report as a frequent contributor to pro-Kremlin outlets South Front and News Front, which were hit with U.S. sanctions.

“These fabricated accusations build on years of previous opportunistic messaging both by Russia and the PRC,” the report said.

The Global Engagement Center called China’s spread of disinformation regarding bioweapons laboratories in Ukraine “one of the PRC’s largest disinformation campaigns since 2018, with messaging targeting audiences in multiple languages and regions around the world.”

Chinese outlets have also echoed Russian denials regarding the massacre of Ukrainian civilians in the town of Bucha, near Kyiv, and blocked online and other public discussions of the Bucha events inside China.

Russia has called the Bucha charges a “staged provocation by the [Kyiv] regime,” and top Chinese officials “called for ‘all sides’ to refrain from ‘politicization’ and ‘unfounded accusations,’” the report said.

Chinese disinformation also avoided reporting facts related to the Russian Tochka-U ballistic missile attack on the main railway station in Kramatorsk, Ukraine, on April 8. The strike killed more than 50 people, including children, and injured hundreds. The Russian Foreign Ministry denied responsibility and said Ukraine is known to have used the same missile — despite evidence that the Russians had deployed the missile, the report said.

As with its backing of the Russians on the Bucha massacre, Chinese officials’ response to the Kramatorsk bombing was to call for an investigation and warn “all sides” against politicizing the controversy.

“PRC media and Consul General in Osaka, Japan, Xue Jian, went so far as to repost the Russian conspiracy theory that Ukraine is responsible for bombing its own civilians in Kramatorsk,” the report said.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Capitol Police beef up Court security
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/3/capitol-police-beef-security-supreme-court-after-/
GIST	<p>The U.S. Capitol Police announced Tuesday they are increasing security around the Supreme Court after a draft opinion for overruling the landmark Roe v. Wade decision was leaked late Monday.</p> <p>“We are working closely with our partner law enforcement agencies to prepare for any potential demonstrations in the area of the Supreme Court, including adding additional officers in the area,” Capitol Police said.</p> <p>Protesters swarmed outside the Supreme Court when the news broke. A fence has been erected around the high court for protection.</p> <p>Former law clerks said the justices need increased security.</p> <p>“This is a major and direct attack on the Court’s judicial independence and it puts the justices in danger,” said Mike Davis, a former clerk to Justice Neil M. Gorsuch.</p> <p>Carrie Severino, a former clerk to Justice Clarence Thomas, said the court has likely already increased security for the justices.</p>

“This just underscores how reckless the decision to leak this was because it obviously does create a threat to the justices as well. It’s just an outrageous thing to do,” Ms. Severino said.

Court watchers were aghast Monday night when news broke that a draft opinion indicates the high court would overrule the 1973 Roe decision, which gave women a national right to an abortion until fetal viability.

It is the first time a full draft opinion has been leaked in the Supreme Court’s 233 year history, according to former law clerks.

In the 98-page draft opinion obtained by Politico, Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. said abortion should return to the state legislatures.

“The Constitution makes no reference to abortion,” he wrote. “Roe was egregiously wrong from the start.”

“It’s time to heed the Constitution and return the issue of abortion to the people’s elected representatives,” reads the opinion, dated from February.

An official ruling in the case is expected by the end of June.

The court is weighing a Mississippi ban on abortion at 15 weeks in the case of Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization.

Mississippi officials argue that Roe should be overturned because it’s outdated. The state contends the viability standard set out in Roe is unclear, and Mississippi has an interest in banning abortions after 15 weeks to protect women’s health and that of unborn children.

The legal battle was brought by Jackson Women’s Health Organization, the state’s only abortion clinic, and a doctor who provides abortions. According to court papers, the clinic provides abortions up to 16 weeks of gestation.

They challenged the state’s Gestational Age Act, enacted in 2018. The law bans abortions after 15 weeks unless there is a medical emergency or severe abnormality within the fetus.

The abortion providers told the court in their filing that the state’s interest in the woman’s health and children doesn’t begin until viability, which occurs “months” after the 15-week marker set in the law.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Spike: White suicides, Black homicides
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/3/study-finds-rise-white-suicides-jump-black-homicid/
GIST	<p>Spikes in the numbers of White men taking their own lives and Black men dying of gunshot injuries drove firearm deaths in the U.S. to a record high in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a new report.</p> <p>Researchers from the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions said Tuesday their analysis of 45,222 U.S. gun deaths in 2020 showed that young Black men constituted more than half of 19,384 homicides, while White men represented 70% of the 24,292 firearm suicides.</p> <p>“So we know that this is a racial justice issue, this is a health equity issue,” said study researcher Ari Davis, a senior policy analyst for the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence.</p> <p>“If we want to address racial health disparities, we should be addressing gun violence,” said Mr. Davis, who joined other authors of the study, titled “A Year in Review,” in a virtual briefing with reporters Tuesday.</p>

The analysis, based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data, was made public Thursday.

The researchers said states with strong gun control laws like Hawaii had fewer gun deaths per capita than states with weak gun control laws like Mississippi.

“Firearms are exceptionally lethal,” said injury epidemiologist Cassandra Crifasi, an assistant professor at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Ms. Crifasi said the study’s seven co-authors recommend that states pass gun licensing laws, universal background checks and firearm-removal legislation to reduce the number of gun deaths — though she acknowledged the political challenges such policies would face.

She said new gun restrictions need to be respectful of the constitutional right to bear arms.

“We can’t just be telling people what they should be doing,” Ms. Crifasi said.

The Baltimore-based university was renamed in 2001 in honor of former New York mayor and high-profile gun-control advocate Michael R. Bloomberg, who has donated almost \$3 billion to the school.

Second Amendment advocates reacted skeptically on Tuesday to the new call for more restrictions on gun rights.

Mark Oliva, a spokesman for the National Shooting Sports Foundation trade association of gunmakers, said the Johns Hopkins center’s status as part of the Bloomberg School for Public Health betrays its bias.

“This is an institution funded by gun control billionaire Michael Bloomberg. There isn’t a gun control policy proposed that Michael Bloomberg hasn’t embraced,” Mr. Oliva told The Washington Times in an email.

Mr. Oliva said the Johns Hopkins report’s failure to distinguish between “the lawful use and criminal misuse of a firearm intentionally blurs the two separate categories to arrive at the proposed policy recommendations.”

He said the report also doesn’t adjust for the fact that firearm ownership grew with the number of gun deaths from the mid-1990s to 2020.

“FBI crime reports also indicate that while gun ownership was up, crime was down during that same period,” Mr. Oliva said.

In an email, the National Rifle Association told The Times that the report also glosses over the impact of progressive policies on young male shootings.

“The fact that communities choose to defund law enforcement, elect prosecutors who refuse to prosecute criminals, prematurely release dangerous prisoners, shut down schools, shut down workplaces, ban sports and outdoor activities, it is no surprise to see an uptick in youth violent crime,” the NRA said.

According to the Johns Hopkins analysis, an average of 124 people died from gun violence every day in 2020 — 15 more than in 2019.

“This increase was driven by a dramatic rise in gun homicides — nearly 5,000 more gun homicides than in 2019 — and persistently high numbers of gun suicides,” the report states.

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HEADLINE	05/04 Day 70 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/04/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-70-of-the-invasion

- **Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskiy confirmed 156 people who were [successfully evacuated from the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol](#) arrived in Zaporizhzhia on Tuesday.** "Today 156 people arrived in Zaporizhzhia. Women and children. They have been in shelters for more than two months," he said. Another 200 civilians are still trapped under the complex and approximately 100,000 remain in the city, Mariupol's mayor, Vadym Boichenko, said. **Russian troops continued to shell and attempted to storm the Azovstal steelworks in violation of ceasefire agreements, the president said.**
- **Russian attacks in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region killed 21 civilians and injured 27 on Tuesday,** according to the regional governor. In a Telegram [post](#), Pavlo Kyrylenko said it was the highest daily death toll in the region since an assault on a railway station in the town of Kramatorsk, which killed 50 people last month.
- **Power substations in Lviv were hit by Russian missiles on Tuesday evening,** according to the city's mayor. The strike reportedly injured one person, Andriy Sadovyi said.
- **[The EU sanctions intent on breaking "the Russian war machine" are now imminent](#), the president of the European Council has said.** A proposal to phase in a prohibition on Russian oil imports will be discussed by member state ambassadors in Brussels on Wednesday, with the most dependent, such as Slovakia and Hungary, seeking exemptions. EU officials handed over a draft sanctions plan to member states late on Tuesday, but divisions in the legally and diplomatically fraught negotiations continue as some member states seek sanctions opt-outs.
- **UK prime minister [Boris Johnson said "Ukraine will win" against Russia](#) and "will be free" in an address to the Ukrainian parliament virtually on Tuesday.** Johnson was the first world leader to address the Verkhovna Rada since the conflict began.
- **Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, has [passed a law](#) that bans political parties that justify, recognise or deny Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine.** The law will also ban parties who glorify or justify the actions of those carrying out armed aggression against Ukraine.
- **Russian president Vladimir Putin told France's president Emmanuel Macron that "western countries could help stop the crimes of the Ukrainian military".** Putin is also reported to have told Macron about the Russian approach to negotiations with Kyiv.
- **Putin also [signed a decree on retaliatory economic sanctions against the west](#).** According to Reuters, the sanctions are in response to the "unfriendly actions of certain foreign states and international organisations", the Kremlin said on Tuesday. The names of individuals or entities affected by the measures are not included on the document.
- **Germany's opposition leader travelled to Kyiv to meet Ukrainian officials,** after the country's chancellor, Olaf Scholz, made clear he would not be visiting Ukraine any time soon.
- **Moscow accused Israel of backing the "neo-Nazi regime in Kyiv".** The remarks are the latest in Russia's diplomatic row with Israel, after the Kremlin's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, said on Monday that Adolf Hitler "had Jewish blood".
- **US president Joe Biden visited a factory in Troy, Alabama, where arms manufacturer Lockheed Martin makes anti-tank Javelin missiles.** He lauded the "rapid pace" of military equipment and aid from the US to Ukraine in the two months since Russia initiated the war.
- **Russia's invasion of Ukraine is inflicting damage to the country's infrastructure at a [cost of \\$4.5bn \(£3.6bn\) a week](#).** According to estimates compiled by the Kyiv School of Economics (KSE), the damage has reached \$92bn since the invasion began in February.
- **[Men and boys are among the alleged victims of rape by Russian soldiers](#) in Ukraine,** where [dozens of cases of sexual violence by the invading forces](#) are already under investigation, UN and Ukrainian officials said on Tuesday. **Ukraine's prosecutor general, Iryna Venediktova, accused Russia of using rape as a war tactic,** and described president Vladimir Putin as "the main war criminal of the 21st century".
- **Pope Francis has said he requested a meeting Putin over [Ukraine](#) and compared the scale of the bloodshed to Rwanda's genocide.** Questioning the conflict's causes, the pope spoke of an "anger" in the Kremlin which could have been "facilitated" by "the barking of Nato at Russia's door".

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HEADLINE	05/03 Airline workers stranded: staff shortages
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/may/03/airline-workers-stranded-staff-shortages-us

GIST

US airlines are still experiencing staffing shortages as air travel rebounded after initial Covid-19 shutdowns in 2020 when many airline workers were encouraged to go on furlough, resign, or retire early.

The phenomenon promises to disrupt travel for flyers even as Americans largely seek to return to many pre-pandemic habits, including air travel for work and tourism.

At JetBlue, flight delays and cancellations have been attributed to staff shortages. Transport Workers United, which represents about 5,000 flight attendants at JetBlue, criticized the airline's blaming of flight attendants for not accepting enough assignments, causing delays and cancellations.

The union argued JetBlue had responded to staff shortages and operational problems by increasing disciplinary actions toward workers, including increasing the amount of critical coverage days workers must be available to work or else accrue disciplinary attendance points that could lead to termination.

"Historically, JetBlue has always run a skeleton staff of crew members in all their departments," said a longtime flight attendant at JetBlue who requested to remain anonymous as they are not authorized to speak with the media.

The flight attendant said problems related to Covid-19 such as canceled, rescheduled or delayed flights that prolong time on duty or away from home and difficulties with transportation and hotel lodging for flight attendants have made many workers reluctant to accept extra assignments.

They also said many flight attendants experiencing delays or flight changes have waited several hours for JetBlue to get them a hotel room or transportation to a hotel in a layover city, cutting into their rest time. Some have given up and paid for a hotel or transportation out of pocket.

"You are kept hostage at times and are unable to get home. This is really hard for people that do have children or parents that they help take care of," the flight attendant said. "They're not thinking of us as humans. We're still human beings involved in all of this too. We want to see our company succeed and we all want to come to work, we want to do the best we can, we want the passengers to keep coming back, but I feel like the thought of us as actual human beings has been removed from the equation. We're just robots that are here to get the job done and I think that's the thing we're struggling with the most, that there is no respect for the workers any more."

Gary Peterson, vice-president of the air division at Transport Workers United, argued JetBlue and other carriers have been competing in a race to the bottom terms of how workers are treated, retaining enough workers, and maintaining airline jobs as career jobs.

"I think there's a systemic problem in the industry – everybody's trying to compete against the lowest carrier, instead of setting themselves up to be the premier carrier," said Peterson. "Sleeping in the hallway at the airport – that never used to happen in the industry, and now it's becoming the new norm."

At Spirit Airlines, staffing problems have contributed to four operation meltdowns since August 2021, an unheard-of frequency according to the Association of Flight Attendants – Communications Workers of America (AFA-CWA).

Workers at Spirit Airlines have protested outside airports in Las Vegas, Orlando and Dallas in recent weeks over contract violations by the airlines, mass cancellations that have stranded flight attendants, and persistent staffing shortages.

Don Reno Intreglia, a Spirit Airlines flight attendant based in Orlando, Florida, and AFA-CWA vice-president for Spirit Airlines, said the airline's cancellation team and a separate team that handles flight attendant scheduling will get out of sync or fall behind, causing a domino effect in operations and leaving flight attendants to deal with frustrated passengers with no information.

The result, he said, had been flight attendants being stranded away from home with no hotel lodging, left for up to 30 hours with no answers or resolution.

“It’s been horrible on the morale for the flight attendants, because you’re sleeping on an airport floor, you’ve got pretty much nowhere to go. We had flight attendants who were getting kicked out of airports in the middle of the night,” said Intreglia. “We want the traveling public to know that we’re trying to pressure management into making serious changes, so that we are prepared for the summer travel.”

Pilots have been experiencing similar difficulties.

Pilots with Alaska Airlines are voting on a strike authorization as new union contract negotiations continue and the airline experiences a shortage of pilots.

At Delta Air Lines, pilots represented by the Airline Pilots Association have been protesting over the past several weeks outside Delta hubs in Seattle, Atlanta, Salt Lake City, Detroit, Los Angeles and Minneapolis, over excessive scheduling and fatigue.

“Our pilots are tired and fatigued,” said Captain Evan Baach. “Our pilots are working record amounts of overtime, we’re working longer days, we have shorter nights in between our duty periods. We want the company to match their words with action and make changes to the pilot schedules.”

A spokesperson for Delta Air Lines said in an email, “Pilot schedules remain in line with all requirements set by the FAA as well as those outlined in our pilot contract. All of our people, including our pilots, are working hard to restore our airline and deliver for our customers as we emerge from the pandemic. We are grateful for and proud of their efforts.”

JetBlue and Spirit Airlines did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Covid hospitalization cognitive decline
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/science/2022/may/03/covid-hospitalisation-thinking-ageing-cognitive-decline-illness
GIST	<p>People who have been hospitalised with Covid may be left with difficulties in thinking comparable in magnitude to ageing 20 years, research suggests.</p> <p>As the pandemic swept the world it became apparent that coronavirus could not only cause immediate health problems but also leave some people with often debilitating symptoms – a condition known as long Covid.</p> <p>According to one UK study, about a third of patients who experienced symptoms after being hospitalised felt fully recovered a year later, with little improvement for most patients in areas including physical function and cognitive impairment.</p> <p>Now experts have revealed that some patients were left with, on average, a lingering cognitive decline. David Menon, a professor at Cambridge University and senior author of the study, said the degree of impairment was linked to the severity of illness.</p> <p>“[Covid] does cause problems with a variety of organs in the body, including the brain and our cognitive function and our psychological health,” he said. “If you can have a vaccine, and all your doses, you will have less severe illness. So all of these problems are going to be less.”</p> <p>Writing in the eClinicalMedicine journal, Menon and colleagues report how they examined the results of cognitive tests performed by 46 patients, on average six months after they were admitted to Addenbrooke’s hospital in Cambridge between March and July 2020. Of this group, 16 received mechanical ventilation.</p>

	<p>The cognitive tests were carried out via the Cognitron platform, developed by researchers at Imperial College London, which formed the basis of the BBC's Great British Intelligence Test.</p> <p>The team compared the results with those of 460 people who took part in the BBC challenge and who had never had Covid. Ten people were matched for each patient according to characteristics such as age, gender, education and first language.</p> <p>The results suggest those who were hospitalised with Covid had particular cognitive impairments, including slower processing speed.</p> <p>“The thing they struggle with most is verbal reasoning,” said Menon, noting that included completing analogies such as laces are to shoes what buttons are to coat.</p> <p>The study suggests that while the cognitive impairments were distinct, the magnitude of the change was, on average, on a par with the cognitive decline seen as people age from 50 to 70 years old.</p> <p>The team found no strong difference in the level of cognitive impairment between those who completed the tests six months after hospital admission and patients tested at 10 months, although there were hints of an improvement. The will return for further tests to see if a stronger association has emerged.</p> <p>Menon added that investigating cognitive decline in Covid patients may not only help them but also those who experienced similar problems after other illnesses.</p> <p>“The trials that we will be able to conduct will allow us to understand the underlying mechanisms and produce effective treatments to prevent it happening and perhaps treat it later,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 WA abortion providers brace for influx
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/washington-state-abortion-providers-brace-themselves-for-influx-of-patients
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - If the landmark Roe vs. Wade decision is overturned, it will bring a seismic shift in who will have access to abortion services in America. If federal protection of abortion rights were to end, there are 26 states that are either certain or likely to ban abortion.</p> <p>According to the Guttmacher Institute, Washington and several other West Coast states have laws already on the books protecting abortion rights.</p> <p>Washington state providers could see an influx of patients coming from out-of-state if the Supreme Court ends the right to an abortion.</p> <p>Dr. Nariman Heshmati is an OB-Gyn and VP of the Washington State Medical Association.</p> <p>“That’s what concerns us. It will lead to more patients traveling and trying to seek us out for care,” said Dr. Heshmati. “We are going to see an uptick in the number of people coming and seeking care in WA for abortions.”</p> <p>Dr. Heshmati says he’s heard from doctors across our state about it already.</p> <p>“We’ve already started to see that with some of the events in Idaho and Texas in these last few months. I think it’s reasonable to say we’re going to get even more of that,” said Heshmati.</p> <p>KOMO News asked Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates what could happen to Washington State providers.</p>

“It would be close to a 400 percent increase in the number of people for whom their closest abortion provider would be in Washington,” said Jennifer Allen, CEO of Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates. “Not all of them will need abortion care, but those who do in that number would have to come to Washington if they wanted to get it.”

“We have already seen our case volume double this year,” said Riley Kene with Northwest Abortion Access Fund.

The group provides financial and travel help to people who seek an abortion across the Northwest.

“I would assume if the trigger laws that are on the books go into effect, we would potentially see a quadrupling of the caseload,” said Kene.

Kene said Washington State providers are already taxed. And a potential influx of patients could mean longer wait times for patients. That’s not all.

“The cost goes up exponentially every week because it becomes a more complicated procedure. There are more limitations on who can perform that procedure,” said Kene.

Our regional chapter of Planned Parenthood doesn’t know how many patients would be coming to WA State for an abortion. The demand may be more than providers can handle.

But health care providers say Washington state will do its best to make sure patients get the care they need.

“You don’t want any barriers of any kind to health care including abortions,” said Heshmati.

“We are standing strong and ready to serve as many patients as we can. We don’t know what the increase in numbers of patients will be,” said Allen.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Supreme Court confirms leak
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/03/us/roe-wade-abortion-supreme-court
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Tuesday confirmed that a leaked draft ruling to overturn the landmark Roe v. Wade decision was authentic but not final, even as the disclosure triggered political upheaval with potentially broad electoral and legal consequences.</p> <p>While protesters gathered outside the court, chanting loudly enough for members of Congress to hear at the Capitol across the street, Democrats led by President Biden vowed to make abortion rights a defining issue of the fall midterm elections. Republicans accused liberals of orchestrating the leak to intimidate the court while Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. ordered an investigation.</p> <p>“If this decision holds, it’s really quite a radical decision,” Mr. Biden told reporters. Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the Democratic leader, called it “an abomination” and Speaker Nancy Pelosi accused the court of “brazenly ignoring 50 years of its own precedent.” But House Republican leaders issued a joint statement calling it potentially “a decision that protects our most basic and precious right, the right to life.”</p> <p>The draft opinion by Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. was circulated among the justices in February with the support of at least five of the nine members of the court, but a final decision is not expected to be issued until June or early July. Such drafts routinely change as they are traded among the justices, who offer suggestions, make objections and at times even change their votes, so it is conceivable that the final result may yet be narrower than Justice Alito initially envisioned.</p>

But the disclosure of his draft made clear that a bedrock of American law for the last half-century could be on the verge of being reversed. If the court follows through with some version of Justice Alito's opinion, the constitutional right to abortion, first established by the court in 1973, would be negated and it would be left to the states to decide whether the procedure should be legal in their jurisdictions or not. The result would be a patchwork of different laws across the country, unless Congress steps in and sets a single national policy again.

Such a decision by the court would successfully culminate a decades-long movement by conservatives who argue that life begins at conception and that Roe invented a right that did not exist in the Constitution. At the same time, it would represent a devastating defeat for liberals who sought to guard women's right to choose the procedure against years of efforts to chip away at the ruling.

The [disclosure of a draft opinion](#) in such a major case is unheard-of in modern times and has thrown the Supreme Court into turmoil as it faces a stunning breach of its traditionally secret deliberations. The court has largely been immune to the sort of leaks that have been common in other major institutions, but justices, clerks and others close to the court may find a new atmosphere of suspicion amid speculation about who is to blame and what their motivation is.

Chief Justice Roberts called it a "betrayal of the confidences of the Court" and ordered an investigation. "This was a singular and egregious breach of that trust that is an affront to the Court and the community of public servants who work here," he said in a statement issued by the court.

In the same statement, the court confirmed that Justice Alito's draft was real, while emphasizing that no one should assume that it will necessarily reflect the final decision. "Although the document described in yesterday's reports is authentic, it does not represent a decision by the Court or the final position of any member on the issues in the case," the statement said.

Nonetheless, governors and legislators across the country moved to prepare for a post-Roe era. Liberal states vowed to protect abortion rights in their jurisdictions, as was the case in California, where Gov. Gavin Newsom called for a state constitutional amendment, saying "we are going to fight like hell." For their part, leaders in conservative states like South Dakota, Arkansas, Georgia and Indiana talked about calling special legislative sessions to ban the procedure as soon as the Supreme Court rules, and in Oklahoma, Gov. Kevin Stitt signed a bill barring abortion after six weeks.

Mr. Schumer announced that he will hold a vote next week on legislation meant to codify the Roe principles into federal law. But it would presumably be a symbolic action since he did not appear to have a majority of 51 votes, much less the 60 needed to overcome a filibuster, and Senator Joe Manchin III, the centrist Democrat from West Virginia, reiterated that he opposes eliminating the filibuster.

Polls have shown that most Americans support at least some form of abortion rights, even if they support selected limits. [A survey by CNN in January](#) found that just 30 percent of Americans wanted the court to completely overturn Roe, while 69 percent were opposed. Democrats over the years have failed to translate that broad popular support into commensurate political power in Congress and on the Supreme Court.

But they hoped the more palpable threat to abortion rights would now galvanize complacent liberals and independents to turn out in the fall. Ms. Pelosi and a host of other Democrats wasted little time fund-raising off the leaked draft ruling in hopes of changing the subject from inflation, the coronavirus and other issues that have dragged them down in the polls.

"I don't say this lightly," a fund-raising email sent in Ms. Pelosi's name said. "This election just turned into the biggest fight for women's rights in our nation's history."

Mr. Biden warned that a decision along the lines of Justice Alito's opinion could unravel a whole range of privacy rights, including same-sex marriage. "It basically says all the decisions related to your private life,

who you marry, whether or not you decide to conceive a child or not, whether or not you can have an abortion, a range of other decisions,” all of those could now be in question, he told reporters.

Justice Alito in his draft preemptively rejected that argument. “To ensure that our decision is not misunderstood or mischaracterized, we emphasize that our decision concerns the constitutional right to abortion and no other right,” he wrote. “Nothing in this opinion should be understood to cast doubt on precedents that do not concern abortion.”

For a party on the verge of a long-sought momentous victory, however, Republicans seemed less interested in celebrating than complaining. After working for years to install judges and justices sympathetic to their view of abortion, they focused less on the result than on the leak that they assumed reflected an effort to thwart it.

“One of the court’s most essential and sacred features was smashed just to buy the outrage-industrial complex a few extra days to scream nonsense about what the court might rule,” said Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Senate Republican leader who worked closely with former President Donald J. Trump to confirm three conservative justices providing the core of the apparent majority.

It was not at all clear, though, that the leaker was a liberal. Some longtime court watchers speculated that a conservative might have reason to reveal the draft opinion in hopes of locking in wavering justices. Chief Justice Roberts had signaled hesitance to overturn Roe entirely, and if he could win over Justice Brett M. Kavanaugh, they could force a ruling that might uphold the restrictive Mississippi law in question without directly upending the prior ruling.

Such a result would nonetheless gut a key provision of Roe and its follow-on rulings. The Mississippi law bans abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy, while current Supreme Court precedent guarantees the right to the procedure until a fetus is considered viable outside the womb, which is typically around 23 weeks.

Senator Mike Braun of Indiana was one of the few elected Republicans who offered a full-throated cheer for Justice Alito’s decision. “If the leaked opinion is accurate, then today is a landmark day for the sanctity of human life in our country,” he said. “I am 100 percent pro-life and pray it is true that the Supreme Court will follow through and save countless lives.”

Thirteen states [already have so-called trigger laws](#), passed in the years since the Roe decision, which would empower them to ban the procedure immediately or within weeks, while five others [have decades-old abortion laws](#) on the books that could be restored. Several states would prohibit abortions after six weeks, earlier than many women even realize that they are pregnant. Abortion bans [have been introduced in multiple states](#) this year.

Such laws could affect hundreds of thousands of women each year. The number of abortions in the United States fell consistently from the early 1980s to [862,320 in 2017](#), although by some estimates it ticked back up slightly in following years. As a proportion of all women of childbearing years, abortions fell by more than half in the last four decades, from 29.3 per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 in 1981 to 13.5 in 2017, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a research organization that supports abortion rights.

Even as abortions have become rarer, foes have become more assertive in challenging Roe, including Mississippi with its 15-week ban and Texas with a ban on the procedure as early as six weeks that can be enforced by private parties in court.

As the likelihood of Roe’s reversal sunk in around Washington on Tuesday, a blame game quickly began among the ruling’s supporters. Some pointed to former President Barack Obama for not fighting harder to fill an empty Supreme Court seat in his final year in the face of a blockade by Mr. McConnell, while others lamented Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s refusal to retire, which allowed Mr. Trump, following her death in 2020, to fill her seat with Amy Coney Barrett.

	<p>Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a liberal Democrat from New York, focused her ire on Tuesday on Senator Kyrsten Sinema, a moderate Democrat from Arizona, saying on Twitter that “we could protect Roe tomorrow, but Sinema refuses to act on the filibuster.”</p> <p>Senator Susan Collins of Maine, one of the few Republican abortion-rights supporters in Congress, expressed anger at Justices Kavanaugh and Neil M. Gorsuch, saying their reported support for Justice Alito’s draft ruling “would be completely inconsistent” with what they told her about Roe being settled law or the importance of precedent before she voted to confirm them.</p> <p>That, of course, led to a torrent of online criticism of Ms. Collins for believing Justices Kavanaugh and Gorsuch in the first place.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Protests held in cities nationwide
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/03/us/roe-wade-abortion-supreme-court#abortion-rights-supporters-are-protesting-in-cities-nationwide
GIST	<p>Protesters across the country expressed their fury on Tuesday night about the leaked Supreme Court draft opinion that strongly suggests Roe v. Wade will soon be overturned. Crowds marched and chanted in support of abortion rights in San Francisco and New York, in Chicago and Atlanta, in Houston and Salt Lake City.</p> <p>Smaller protests took place in cities like Louisville, Ky., where a few dozen people held signs in front of the courthouse square. Jane Jones, 38, a public-school teacher, said she had become disillusioned with the Supreme Court and was angry about the apparent ruling. “Bodily autonomy is important to the sanctity of our democratic process,” she said.</p> <p>But in downtown Seattle, thousands of people called for an escalating series of mass action, including possible national strikes if the constitutional right to abortion is abolished.</p> <p>As protesters held signs such as “Forced Motherhood Is Female Enslavement” and chanted that it is time for people to “rise up,” speakers said that people needed to risk arrest through civil disobedience to ensure that a new generation of women did not end up with fewer rights than their mothers.</p> <p>“We are facing the single biggest attack on women and reproductive rights in most of our lifetimes,” Councilwoman Kshama Sawant said.</p> <p>Earlier in the day, Gov. Jay Inslee vowed that abortion rights would be protected in the state, saying he wanted to explore a state constitutional amendment. He also said he would work to provide resources for people who travel to Washington State for the procedure.</p> <p>In another corner of the country, several hundred people gathered at the Florida Supreme Court in Tallahassee to show their support for abortion rights. Margaret Lamar, 68, was among the protesters who were waving signs reading “Bans Off Our Bodies” and encouraging drivers to honk in support.</p> <p>“This is so important,” Ms. Lamar said. “I’m so disgusted and upset. And, I think I speak for most American women.”</p> <p>Lauren Brenzel, who works for the Florida Alliance of Planned Parenthood Affiliates and was one of the organizers of the protest, said more demonstrations would be planned for the coming weeks.</p> <p>“This is about maintaining presence and making sure that our court system and our legislators and our leadership know that attacks on abortion like this are dangerous, unacceptable, and not what the people want,” Ms. Brenzel said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/04 EU proposes total ban on Russia oil
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/04/world/ukraine-russia-war-news
GIST	<p>The European Union on Wednesday proposed a total Russian oil embargo, banning the import of crude oil in the next six months and refined oil products by the end of 2022, in its biggest and most costly step yet toward supporting Ukraine and weaning itself from its dependence on Russian fossil fuels.</p> <p>The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, detailed the proposal as she presented the broad outlines of a new, sixth package of E.U. sanctions against Russia.</p> <p>The move came as United States and its allies were also trying to capitalize on Russia's languid progress on the battlefield by escalating their efforts to weaken its military and tip the war's balance toward Ukraine. The United States and Britain have been sending streams of increasingly powerful arms, and Russia's nordic neighbors — Finland and Sweden — are inching closer to joining NATO.</p> <p>At the same time, analysts and officials are quietly beginning to question why Russian troops appear to be acting with restraint rather than engaging in an all-out offensive in their battle for eastern Ukraine. A Pentagon official this week described Russia's fight there as "very cautious, very tepid."</p> <p>And Ukrainian civilians are still suffering from Russian aggression. Detailed accounts are emerging from those who escaped after weeks of sheltering in a besieged steel plant in the southern city of Mariupol. Some of the nearly 130 women, children and older people who arrived at an evacuation point on Tuesday described living for weeks in the near-total darkness of underground bunkers with little food or water, and enduring the relentless pounding of explosives.</p> <p>Their passage to the relative safety of Zaporizhzhia, a city controlled by Ukraine, was a rare, if limited, victory for diplomacy. Russian troops had allowed the United Nations and the International Committee for the Red Cross access to Mariupol to assist civilians after weeks of intense attacks that has reduced the city to ruins.</p> <p>In other developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russian missiles struck power substations in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, knocking out some electricity, the mayor said. The attacks were the most widespread yet inside the city, where tens of thousands of civilians fleeing fighting in the east have sought refuge. • President Biden visited a Lockheed Martin factory in Alabama that manufactures Javelin missiles used by Ukrainian soldiers against Russian tanks. He told workers there that they were empowering Ukrainians to defend themselves in a battle "between autocracy and democracy." • The U.S. State Department said it had determined W.N.B.A. star Brittney Griner had been "wrongfully detained" in Russia, two months after she was taken into custody and accused of having drugs in her luggage.
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HEADLINE	05/03 Coronavirus surging in Puerto Rico
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/03/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases#puerto-rico-covid-surge
GIST	<p>The coronavirus is surging in Puerto Rico, with new cases being reported at a per-capita rate more than six times the national average. The spike began just five days after the island lifted all its pandemic restrictions.</p> <p>Puerto Rico has reached a seven-day average of 4,000 reported cases a day, more than 3,700 of them first-time infections — up from fewer than 200 new cases a day in early March. Though the island accounts for less than 1 percent of the United States population, it is reporting 7 percent of the nation's new cases.</p> <p>"It was doubling every week for a couple of weeks," said Rafael A. Irizarry, a Harvard statistician who keeps a dashboard on Puerto Rico's Covid-19 data.</p>

The increase in cases is no longer quite so steep, but it has been going on long enough now to show as well in a dreaded lag effect: hospitalizations are rising. Though only 245 people on the island are currently hospitalized with coronavirus infections, that's nearly three times the number from two months ago, according to Department of Health data.

New case reports started climbing on March 15, five days after Gov. Pedro R. Pierluisi lifted all coronavirus restrictions in Puerto Rico, including requirements for patrons to show proof of vaccination to enter indoor venues and for travelers arriving in Puerto Rico to show a recent negative test, Mr. Irizarry said.

The Holy Week holiday season leading up to Easter Sunday, and a series of big concerts where most people in attendance did not wear masks, did not help the situation. The superstar Dominican musician Juan Luis Guerra tested positive a few days after performing in San Juan.

Puerto Rico achieved high rates of initial vaccination — 78 percent of the island's population is fully vaccinated, well above the national average of 66 percent. But many people in Puerto Rico have not received booster shots, and there was an explosion of new cases on the island around the Christmas and New Year's holidays, when the Omicron variant first surged in much of the country.

Governor Pierluisi has said that the era of mandates has passed, and it was now up to individual citizens to look to their own sense of "civic responsibility" to decide what precautions to take. Even so, in late April, his administration reinstituted mask mandates in schools.

A coalition of scientists advising the island's government had urged it to take a tougher stance on mask-wearing, according to Dr. Kenira Thompson, president of the coalition of scientists and vice president for research at Ponce Health Sciences University in Puerto Rico.

Dr. Thompson said the rise in cases was a natural result of lifting mandates on the mainland and on the island, which has seen a steady stream of visitors this year.

"Walk through the airport in San Juan — it's packed," Dr. Thompson said. "There's been a lot of interchanging of people. Tourism is Puerto Rico's main source of income. We are happy to have people here. But with that exchange of people, we are going to have an increase in positivity and the spread of disease."

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HEADLINE	05/03 Cases emerge after White House dinner
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/03/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases#covid-white-house-correspondents-dinner
GIST	<p>A handful of coronavirus cases have emerged among people who attended the White House Correspondents' Dinner over the weekend, the president of the correspondents' association said on Tuesday.</p> <p>Steven Portnoy of CBS News Radio, who leads the White House Correspondents' Association, said the cases he knew of so far numbered in the "single digits."</p> <p>Among those who tested positive after the gala — an annual event that skipped two years because of the pandemic — was Steve Herman, a chief national correspondent for Voice of America. Jonathan Karl, ABC News's chief Washington correspondent, also tested positive, according to a person familiar with the matter.</p> <p>Official case counts in Washington have largely been decreasing since the winter Omicron surge, but there has been a modest increase since mid-April. But the true number of cases is uncertain, as home tests generally are not officially reported and asymptomatic people may not realize they are infected and capable of spreading the virus.</p>

Many had wondered [whether it was advisable](#) to gather a crowd of 2,600 into the packed hotel ballroom of the Washington Hilton hotel. Their concerns were underscored after dozens of people, including several members of Mr. Biden's cabinet, recently tested positive after attending a smaller political gathering, the Gridiron Dinner.

Attendees at that event were required to show proof of vaccination, but no same-day coronavirus test results. The White House Correspondents' Dinner required proof of vaccination and a same-day negative test, and boosters were strongly encouraged. Masking was optional at both.

Mr. Karl's positive test was first reported by [Politico](#), which also reported that he shook hands with President Biden at the event.

The White House, asked about that encounter, pointed on Tuesday night to guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which considers "close contact" to mean at least 15 minutes spent within six feet of an infected person. White House protocols also required that anyone who would have been onstage in proximity to the president, including Mr. Karl and Mr. Noah, take a medically certified test, according to a person familiar with the protocols.

Mr. Karl tested negative on Saturday afternoon and had no symptoms, but tested positive on Monday night, the person familiar with his situation said.

Mr. Biden, 79, did not wear a mask when making remarks onstage or during the comedian Trevor Noah's roughly half-hour commentary, but skipped the knife-and-fork part of the dinner. He nodded to the safety precautions around the event in his remarks. "We're here to show the country that we're getting through this pandemic," he told the crowd.

[Mr. Noah opened his remarks bluntly](#). "It is my great honor to be speaking tonight at the nation's most distinguished superspreader event," he said, as the crowd laughed. "No, for real, people, what are we doing here? Let's be honest, what are we doing? Like, did none of you learn anything from the Gridiron dinner? Nothing?" More laughs.

"Do you read any of your own newspapers?" he went on, adding: "You guys spent the last two years telling everyone the importance of wearing masks and avoiding large indoor gatherings. Then the second someone offers you a free dinner, you all turn into Joe Rogan."

The extravagant gala is often bookended by a number of other parties and receptions in the capital, which set their own safety guidelines.

Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, Mr. Biden's top medical adviser on the virus, pulled out of the dinner last week, citing an "individual assessment of my personal risk," though he reportedly attended a related indoor-outdoor brunch event over the weekend.

Mr. Portnoy emphasized on Tuesday that the protocols the correspondents' association implemented for the dinner itself went beyond current guidance from health agencies and pointed to an email he sent members in April.

"Nothing we implement to protect the ballroom can reach the many social events other organizers throw around our dinner," he wrote in that email. "Bear that in mind."

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HEADLINE	05/03 DOH: free Covid rapid tests still available
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/wa-state-and-federal-government-websites-still-offer-free-covid-tests-heres-how-to-order-yours/

GIST	<p>If you've used up the rapid tests you ordered in January, there are still rapid tests available from both Washington state and the federal government.</p> <p>While tests quickly ran out when the Washington Department of Health first launched its website earlier this year, the department has plenty of tests now, according to DOH spokesperson Frank Ameduri. "We have about 3.3 million tests on hand and more on the way," he said.</p> <p>In March, Washington public health officials announced an expansion of their free COVID-19 test program to allow up to two orders per household every month, while supplies last.</p> <p>The White House also expanded its program in March to allow households to order a second batch of four more.</p> <p>As of April 26, Washington state's program has received over 1 million orders and distributed tests to over 695,000 households.</p> <p>Ordering free at-home tests from the federal government</p> <p>The federal government launched its site, COVIDTests.gov, in January. Originally, each household was able to request one order of four tests. Now, White House officials say orders are limited to two per household, with each order containing four rapid antigen tests. The tests usually ship within 12 days, according to the White House.</p> <p>For help placing an order, call 800-232-0233 (daily from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. PST). In some cases addresses may not be recognized as multifamily homes or units. If there's an issue because you believe an order has already been placed using your address, contact USPS at 800-275-8777 or file a service request at emailus.usps.com/s/the-postal-store-inquiry.</p> <p>Ordering free at-home tests from Washington state</p> <p>Washington state also in January launched its website to order free tests, sayyescovidhometest.org.</p> <p>Kits should arrive about one to two weeks after ordering, according to the site. In some parts of the state, residents also have the option of picking up tests locally, but people are urged to call their local health department first to check.</p> <p>How to understand your tests</p> <p>Do you know the difference between different types of at-home tests? Familiarize yourself with what type of test might be best for you, when to take them and what to do if you test positive. The tests people receive from Washington state or the federal government may also carry an expiration date that is no longer accurate.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 King Co. interim sheriff chosen permanent
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/the-least-traditional-candidate-patti-cole-tindall-interim-king-county-sheriff-is-choice-for-permanent-position/
GIST	<p>King County Executive Dow Constantine has chosen Patti Cole-Tindall to be the county's next full-time sheriff, landing on his interim choice from last fall and the department's former second in command after a nationwide search.</p> <p>Constantine chose Cole-Tindall over two other finalists, from police departments in Atlanta and Texas, stressing the positive reviews she's received from rank-and-file officers during her time as interim sheriff and her nontraditional career, spent largely outside of law enforcement.</p> <p>Cole-Tindall, if confirmed by the Metropolitan King County Council, will be the first appointed sheriff in more than 25 years. King County voters, in 2020, opted to make sheriff an appointed rather than elected position.</p>

A big part of the rationale for making the switch was that it would allow the county to cast a broader net; when the sheriff was elected it essentially limited candidates to those already within the department.

Nonetheless, Constantine chose a candidate from within the department.

“We got a lot of good applicants and they were from outside our department, but they were police officers from other departments, and they were career police officers,” Constantine said. Cole-Tindall, while she’s been with the sheriff’s department for more than six years, worked for years in other areas of government, outside of law enforcement.

“And so she brings a broader and I think different perspective and in many ways,” Constantine said. “She’s maybe the least traditional candidate that we had to consider.”

After several rounds of [interviews, meetings with the public, employees and local leaders, Cole-Tindall won out over the other finalists](#): Charles Kimble, chief of police in Killeen, Texas, and Reginald Moorman, a major in the Atlanta Police Department.

Cole-Tindall, 57, lives in Kent and served as undersheriff, the department’s No. 2, for a year and a half before she became interim sheriff Jan. 1. She previously served as the department’s chief of technical services for almost five years.

Cole-Tindall began her career in law enforcement in 1991 as a special agent with the Washington State Gambling Commission, a position for which she carried a gun and completed the state’s basic law enforcement academy. She moved to the state Employment Security Department, where she worked on investigations into fraud and theft of unemployment benefits.

She moved to King County government in 1998, working as an investigator in the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention. She was later an assistant director in the department’s Community Corrections Division.

Constantine tabbed her in 2010 as the county’s director of labor relations, responsible for representing the county in collective bargaining. She was interim director of the county’s Office of Law Enforcement Oversight in 2014.

She graduated from Central Washington University and has a master’s in public administration from Troy State University, according to her LinkedIn page.

When Constantine [tabbed her as interim sheriff in November](#), she pledged not to seek the full-time job, saying it would be a distraction from the work she needed to do.

But she says she changed her mind after receiving “many, many requests” from department employees who thought “the sheriff’s office was turning around to be an agency that they wanted to be part of.”

She said she called Constantine just before the application deadline and said she wanted to seek the permanent position.

Constantine told her it would not be an easy competition, but she had the right to apply.

Constantine and Cole-Tindall pledged that sheriff’s deputies and cruisers will eventually be equipped with body and dashboard cameras, but neither had a firm timeline, stressing that implementation was expensive and must be collectively bargained. Cole-Tindall’s two predecessors as sheriff both pushed, unsuccessfully, for body cameras on deputies.

Constantine said he was working to put money for body cameras into the two-year budget proposal he will submit this year.

King County Councilmember Girmay Zahilay, the chair of the Law and Justice committee and a police reform advocate, said Cole-Tindall would be in a good position to usher in an era of public safety more focused on public health and community.

“In the few months since she’s stepped into the role of interim sheriff,” Zahilay said, “we’ve seen a big difference in responsiveness, communication, collaboration with her department and so I’m hopeful that she will be the best person for the job.”

Councilmember Pete von Reichbauer said he favored Cole-Tindall and thought she “would be acceptable to a broad spectrum of my colleagues.”

“She already knows the environment, she has worked there, she has worked with all three branches of government,” von Reichbauer said.

Cole-Tindall said her most important work since taking office has been establishing a better relationship and improving communication with the staff and officers of the sheriff’s department.

Like many police departments, the sheriff’s department has struggled with retention — it has 119 vacancies for commissioned officers and is offering both retention and hiring bonuses.

“I don’t think that’s what gets people to come here,” Cole-Tindall said, “it’s morale and feeling good about the work you’re doing.”

She said she’s implemented listening sessions, monthly videos to staff and has worked to establish better relationships with the community.

“It’s just a matter of engaging, being seen, not sitting in the office, being out,” she said at [a public forum last month](#) for the three finalists. “Sitting in the office is not value add, the value is meeting with the troops hearing what they want, hearing what they need and then how can I as a leader respond to that.”

In that public forum, Cole-Tindall billed herself as “a known collaborator, I am a known problem-solver, I am a strong leader.”

Mike Mansanarez, president of the King County Police Officers Guild, the union representing sergeants and deputies, praised Cole-Tindall for “trying to steer the department off the rocks,” where he said it had been when she took over Jan. 1.

Any accusations that Cole-Tindall was “part of the old guard,” due to her coming from within the sheriff’s department, were “the farthest from the truth,” he said.

“She’s listening, where the last sheriff did not,” Mansanarez said. “She’s not a cop, but she’s surrounded herself with cops to help her make decisions, she’s a great all around manager.”

Because so much time passed between her stints in law enforcement, nearly two decades, Cole-Tindall is no longer a certified law enforcement officer. She will have to enroll in, and recomplete Washington’s 19-week basic law enforcement academy. She’ll have to start by January 2023 and said she would appoint somebody to serve as acting sheriff while she’s in the academy.

“I don’t believe that I need to have served for 30 years inside law enforcement in order to be an effective leader,” she said at the public forum. “King County does things differently and this is an opportunity for King County to do things differently again.”

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HEADLINE	05/03 Job openings, quits hit new records
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/05/03/jobs-quits-hires-march-2022/

U.S. employers posted a record 11.5 million job openings in March, and some 4.5 million Americans quit or changed positions, matching previous highs, reflecting continued strength in the rapidly growing labor market, where workers continue to have the upper hand.

Meanwhile, the number of new hires — 6.7 million — remained steady, according to a report released Tuesday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

“Demand for workers remains white-hot,” said Julia Pollak, chief economist at ZipRecruiter. “This is very broad, enormous growth. Even though we’ve almost recovered all of the jobs lost in the pandemic, the labor market just keeps getting tighter and tighter.”

The strong job openings and worker quits data could play into discussions about curbing inflation at the Federal Reserve, which is expected to announce another interest rate hike, by a half-percentage point on Wednesday. Fed Chair Jerome H. Powell has cited the “extremely, historically” tight job market as a major reason he says the economy can withstand higher interest rates without tumbling into recession.

U.S. employers have added more than 400,000 jobs a month for nearly a year, while the unemployment rate of 3.6% remains near record lows. Overall, the number of job openings grew 36% in March from a year earlier. Demand for workers rose markedly in retail (where job openings increased by 155,000 from February), manufacturing (up 75,000) and finance and insurance (up 51,000).

That insatiable need for new workers has forced employers across the economy to offer higher pay and better benefits. Wages have risen 4.7% in the past year, although they have not kept up with inflation, which has grown 8.5% in the same period. Economists say they expect workers’ pay to continue ticking up in coming months as companies compete for a limited pool of workers.

“These record quits across the economy show that employers are under huge pressure,” Pollak said. “They’re going to realize very quickly that offering massive compensation packages to new hires isn’t going to cut it anymore. They’re going to have to raise wages wholesale for existing employees, too.”

Workers who switched jobs saw a 5.3% increase in median pay from a year ago, compared to 4% growth for those who stayed put, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta’s Wage Growth Tracker.

“The balance of power in wage negotiations has tilted toward workers,” Mickey Levy, chief Americas economist for Berenberg Capital Markets, wrote in a client note Tuesday.

Grace Oppy, 26, quit her job at a New York art gallery in March. Less than a month later, she’d found a better-paying position as an assistant at a large financial firm.

“There were a million openings, which was so different from earlier in the pandemic when it was impossible to get a job,” said Oppy, who spent much of the past two years unemployed after losing her marketing job in Paris in early 2020. “Now you can get a job. Can you afford to live? I’m not sure, but at least you can get hired.”

Beyond higher pay, many workers say the strong labor market has emboldened them to take risks they might not have otherwise been willing to consider. Many are prioritizing more flexible arrangements and work-life balance.

In Long Beach, California, Paula Hardy recently left her job as a chiropractor at a women’s clinic to start her own mobile practice. After working six days a week for much of the pandemic, she says she felt burned out and unappreciated.

“I went from making six figures a year to way less than that,” said Hardy, 38, who is also taking classes to become an acupuncturist. “But I’d rather be doing my own thing and eating ramen noodles, even if it is harder financially.”

	<p>It was the second time Hardy has switched jobs during the pandemic. The first time, in December 2020, she left a position as a chiropractor for longshoremen at the Port of Los Angeles after her boss insisted she keep coming to work even while she was sick with the flu.</p> <p>“I was already disillusioned,” she said. “Then I got sick, and it was clear they didn’t care. The pandemic made me realize I don’t have to put up with that.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Even as cases rise, mask mandates not on
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-business-centers-for-disease-control-and-prevention-pandemics-2675d28cdc8ac57179da50ec6a4b3b9f
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — An increase in COVID-19 infections around the U.S. has sent more cities into new high-risk categories that are supposed to trigger indoor mask wearing, but much of the country is stopping short of bringing back restrictions amid deep pandemic fatigue.</p> <p>For weeks, much of upstate New York has been in the high-alert orange zone, a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention designation that reflects serious community spread. The CDC urges people to mask up in indoor public places, including schools, regardless of vaccination status. But few, if any, local jurisdictions in the region brought back a mask requirement despite rising case counts.</p> <p>In New York City, cases are again rising and this week crossed the city’s threshold for “medium risk,” indicating the widening spread of the subvariant known as BA.2 that has swept the state’s northern reaches. But there appears to be little appetite from Mayor Eric Adams to do an about face just a few months after allowing residents to shed masks and put away vaccination cards that were once required to enter restaurants and concert halls. Adams has said the city could pivot and reimpose mandates but has stressed that he wants to keep the city open.</p> <p>“I don’t anticipate many places, if any, going back to mask mandates unless we see overflowing hospitals — that’s what would drive mask mandates,” said Professor David Larsen, a public health expert at Syracuse University in upstate New York, whose own county is currently an orange zone.</p> <p>“People are still dying, but not in the same numbers,” he said.</p> <p>Nationally, hospitalizations are up slightly but still as low as any point in the pandemic. Deaths have steadily decreased in the last three months to nearly the lowest numbers.</p> <p>The muted response reflects the exhaustion of the country after two years of restrictions and the new challenges that health leaders are facing at this phase of the pandemic.</p> <p>An abundance of at-home virus test kits has led to a steep undercount of COVID-19 cases that were once an important benchmark. Researchers estimate that more than 60% of the country was infected with the virus during the omicron surge, bringing high levels of protection on top of the tens of millions of vaccinations. Hospitalizations have increased but only slightly.</p> <p>“If a mask mandate were reinstated right this minute, I don’t think it’d be very successful,” said Jim Kearns, a videographer at the State University of New York in Oswego, another upstate New York community in the CDC’s orange zone.</p> <p>“I think a lot of people are just over it,” he said. “If I saw death rates and hospitalizations going up in crazy numbers, and if I felt that there was a danger to me and my family, I would put it on in a heartbeat. But it has been a long two years.”</p> <p>In Boston, even as COVID-19 cases began to tick up again, there’s been little drive to reimpose the indoor mask mandate city officials largely lifted two months ago. Boston still requires masks in schools and on school buses. A statewide mask mandate was lifted for schools at the end of February.</p>

The city is now focused on what Boston Mayor Michelle Wu has described as recovery efforts, including attracting workers and visitors back to the city's downtown. Health officials continue to urge caution. During April's running of the Boston Marathon, which drew tens of thousands of competitors, race organizers and city officials recommended runners take steps to stop the spread of the virus by getting vaccinated, tested for COVID-19 and not accepting water from spectators.

In Maine, there have been few efforts to reinstate COVID-19 precautions, even after Democratic Gov. Janet Mills tested positive for COVID-19 at the end of April. The 74-year-old, who had received a second booster, said she believes that's "one of the reasons why I am still feeling well" and encouraged others to get vaccinated.

One of the most jarring reactions came in Philadelphia, which last month abandoned its indoor mask mandate just days after becoming the first U.S. metropolis to reimpose compulsory masking in response to an increase in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations.

City officials, who had said they wanted to head off a new wave of infections, abruptly backtracked after what they said was an unexpected drop in the number of people in the hospital and a leveling-off of new infections. The turnabout came amid rising opposition to the reinstatement, but city officials said the decision was about data, not politics.

Inaction by cities comes after a federal judge in Florida last month struck down a national mask mandate for travelers on planes, trains and buses. The CDC still urges people to wear face coverings but the Transportation Security Administration said it would stop enforcing mask mandates at airports and on flights, even as the White House said it would appeal the ruling.

In March, Vermont's largest city, Burlington, ended its indoor mask mandate following a drop in COVID-19 cases. Burlington was one of more than two dozen Vermont communities that required masking after the Legislature in November gave towns and cities the authority to do that. Even as the masks came off, COVID made a return in the state.

Half of Vermont's 14 counties have now been rated as having high community levels of COVID-19, according to the CDC. The rankings are based on a handful of factors, including new hospital admissions for the virus.

Chicago's infection rate is also rising, even though like in most places hospitalizations and deaths remain low.

But the increasing number of infections caused enough concern that the school district sent a letter to parents alerting them to the possibility that with the rise, Cook County, which includes Chicago, "may be moving from 'low risk' to a 'moderate risk' category in the coming days."

The letter did not say if the school district could again require students and staffers to wear masks or return to remote learning.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Seattle, King Co. councils' remote meetings
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/as-covid-restrictions-vanish-seattle-king-county-councils-continue-remote-meetings/
GIST	<p>Restaurants have long since reopened. Theaters and stadiums are crowded. Mask mandates are gone.</p> <p>COVID restrictions have largely disappeared in recent months, both locally and nationally, as the omicron wave has faded and the nation enters a new "transitional phase" of life with the virus.</p> <p>But there is still one notable holdout that is continuing COVID restrictions: Local governments.</p>

The Seattle City Council and the Metropolitan King County Council have continued to meet remotely, even as other legislative bodies have returned to in-person lawmaking.

That might change soon. The King County Council is scheduled to return to in-person meetings June 7, after a \$100,000 upgrade to its legislative chamber to make it easier for the public to comment remotely.

In Seattle, City Council President Debora Juarez says she's in no hurry to return to in-person public meetings, though she and her staff are in the office full time and council central staff recently returned.

As the pandemic wanes, Juarez says, she's weighing the safety and accessibility of public meetings to determine whether, when and how to return to traditional meetings.

Juarez, who has multiple sclerosis, says the pandemic taught her and others the importance of flexibility for people who have medical, financial, or other hurdles to participate in work and meetings.

"This world was made for able-bodied men. Not breastfeeding moms, not the disabled, not the elderly," she said, noting that some council members have young children and other factors that make meetings harder for them to attend in person. "Not everyone has the same starting point."

Juarez, who was out last month with COVID and who has a staff member out with COVID, said that the pandemic and safety are at the top of her mind when making a decision about returning to in-person meetings.

"Right now our main concern of course is managing the risk of COVID in enclosed areas and managing safety concerns for the elected officials," she said.

"If we do return to in-person meetings, it will be a hybrid situation so everyone is comfortable."

The city has largely returned to normal over the past six weeks with city buildings reopening to the public, mask requirements being lifted and most city employees returning to in-person work.

Some of Juarez's peers, like Councilmembers Andrew Lewis and Sara Nelson, say they'd prefer to be meeting in person.

"I would like to go back to in-person council meetings sooner rather than later," Lewis said Friday. "I think it's hard for us to request other employers to return to work if we ourselves are not meeting at the dais."

First-term council member Nelson said she has been "looking forward to the resumption of in-person council meetings because it facilitates a more natural back and forth conversation," but says she respects the different needs of colleagues who might be better suited to work remotely.

"I recognize that everyone has different needs and I think our ability to be flexible is of paramount importance," she said.

As for the public, Juarez says remote meetings have allowed more opportunity for participation, and that any transparency lost to the remote meetings is a secondary issue.

"Access and transparency are second to physical safety, personal safety," Juarez said. "And technology has filled in and has made it even easier to make public comment, so there's really no issue. It may actually be more accessible now."

Lewis says he commends Juarez for her approach to meetings and the return of council staff, and says he will go along with her timing, but he said there is something missing from the collaborative meeting process.

“I firmly, firmly believe it is way more valuable to do democracy in person,” he said, noting the importance of casual, chance conversations. “It diminishes the dynamism of local government if we are only talking to the people we seek to talk to.”

Remote meetings make it easier to participate, but can also raise concerns about access for the less technologically savvy, although most meetings allow participation by telephone.

“For many folks with disabilities, traveling to participate in public meetings is challenging,” said Anna Zivarts, of Disability Rights Washington, testifying about a bill passed by the Legislature this year that requires governing bodies, if feasible, to offer remote testimony options whenever they take public comments. “Allowing people to participate remotely and listen in remotely definitely increases participation.”

Lunell Haught, president of the League of Women Voters of Washington, said that virtual meetings allow people who can’t travel to participate.

“Of course, many who cannot access meetings electronically are at a disadvantage here, but it is certainly a step in the right direction,” Haught said.

George Erb, secretary of the Washington Coalition for Open Government, said their anecdotal evidence suggests that participation in public meetings might have increased during the pandemic. As they transition back to in-person meetings, governments should maintain remote meeting technologies, which make it easier for people who are disabled or lack reliable transportation to participate, Erb said.

This sort of hybrid approach, Erb said, could become a “new normal” for governing bodies statewide.

“We welcome the gradual return to in-person public meetings,” Erb said. “In-person communication is always more effective than remote communication. Plus, information is more plentiful inside the room than outside.

“In-person meetings give public officials and citizens alike more opportunities to establish relationships,” Erb said.

Meanwhile, Shoreline and Renton city councils remain remote. Shoreline hopes to move to a hybrid meeting model by June, City Manager Debbie Tarry said. A Renton City Council liaison didn’t respond to an inquiry as to the city’s plans.

The Sound Transit board remains remote, with tentative plans to go back to in-person sometime between June and September, a spokesperson said.

The Washington Legislature returned, kind of, to in-person lawmaking this year. The House and the Senate started the 2022 session largely remote, but shifted back to in-person, with varying limits on how many lawmakers were allowed on the floor at one time, as the session progressed.

The Kent City Council has been meeting in-person since last summer. Federal Way has been in-person since November. Redmond has been having hybrid, in-person and online meetings since last summer. And Bellevue and Kirkland returned in April, with a hybrid model.

The Pierce County Council returned to in-person meetings last summer. And the Snohomish County Council moved to a hybrid model in March.

That’s the approach King County plans on taking about five weeks from now.

When they make the switch, both council members and the public will be able to participate in the meetings either in-person at the King County Courthouse, or remotely, via telephone or Zoom.

“One of the surprising things about remote Council meetings has been how much better and more public input we’ve gotten in our meetings,” Council Chair Claudia Balducci said. “I thought we’d get more. I was surprised by how much better it was.”

It turns out, freed from making the trudge down to the courthouse in the middle of a Tuesday afternoon, it opened public commenting up to people who otherwise might not have been heard by their elected legislators, Balducci said.

“A lot of people have been able to contact us with real feedback on real issues,” she said. “So that was a key driver in our decision that we wanted to maintain a hybrid remote option.”

The council last year approved \$113,000 for the installation of a new video system, with four big-screen TVs mounted around the 10th floor legislative chamber.

The public will be able to offer comment in-person or remotely. And council members will be able to participate either way as well.

Previously, barring sickness or emergencies, a council member could not participate remotely more than five times per year. But that requirement was scrapped, by unanimous vote, earlier this year.

Balducci said she intends to be there in person, but couldn’t speak for her colleagues.

“It’s healthy for members of an elected body like this to have routine, occasional personal interactions,” she said. “I think you can operate better and not have to work as hard at having good relationships and communications if you do run into each other from time to time.”

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HEADLINE	05/03 Cruise ship overwhelmed by Covid cases?
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/cruise-covid-19-positive-passengers-seattle/281-39e9ae51-79f1-4fc6-9de4-42faa1cee184
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Passengers on a Carnival Cruise Ship that docked Tuesday in Seattle say more than 100 people aboard the ship tested positive for COVID-19 and the ship was overwhelmed.</p> <p>Multiple people say right now they're in hotels across the Seattle area to quarantine after testing positive or being exposed to someone with COVID-19. Carnival Cruise Line would not confirm how many people tested positive on the ship, but said there were a number of positive cases.</p> <p>"As soon as I got diagnosed with COVID, I did not feel safe," said Darren Sieferston, a passenger on the cruise from Miami to Seattle.</p> <p>Sieferston is in quarantine at the hotel after testing positive for COVID while on the ship. He lives in Nevada. He said he's been on seven cruises since August and said every trip had COVID-19 positive passengers. He feels the response from the crew on this recent Carnival Cruise was chaotic.</p> <p>"They didn't have enough staff to handle the emergency that was happening, period," said Sieferston. "They were overwhelmed and they didn't have a backup course in how to handle about 200 people affected with COVID. We all suffered."</p> <p>Passengers tell KING 5 they waited hours for meals, weren't properly isolated and couldn't get ahold of medical staff.</p> <p>"We couldn't call anybody...Basically, we sat in the room, you call and it would ring, ring, ring and ring all day long" said Sieferston.</p>

	<p>Sieferston shared a photo with KING 5, which he says was hung outside the elevator of his floor and included the name and room numbers of people who tested positive. He called it an invasion of privacy.</p> <p>"It's just unacceptable. This ship is so poorly managed. I'm fearful for the people that are going up to Alaska," said Sieferston.</p> <p>The ship de-boarded Tuesday and is already on it's next voyage to Alaska. Carnival wouldn't comment if additional protection would be taken for that trip.</p> <p>Carnival said there were no serious health issues. According to the company's website guest are required to be fully vaccinated and tested before a trip. Some exemptions are accommodated with proper testing.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Pro-choice activists rally at Westlake Park
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/pro-choice-activists-demand-stop-to-potential-roe-v-wade-overturn-at-westlake-park
GIST	<p>SEATTLE—Fired up and ready to take action— hundreds of pro-choice activists took over Westlake Park Tuesday, demanding a stop to the potential overturning of Roe V. Wade.</p> <p>Although the court says the decision is not final, protestors say it's time to fight.</p> <p>Passion, emotion, and frustration resonated on the streets of Seattle.</p> <p>Mothers, fathers, union workers, activists and many in between overflowed Westlake Park to defend Roe V. Wade—the landmark decision protecting the right to abortion.</p> <p>Brione Scott came to the rally with and for her daughters.</p> <p>"This is about my daughters," said Scott. "I have a family full of females that I have to worry about this, so I thought it was important to bring them out here. I'm glad I brought them because now my daughter has more questions that we need to talk about at home."</p> <p>"We're facing the single biggest attack on women and reproductive rights in most of our lifetimes," said Councilmember Kshama Sawant to the passionate crowd.</p> <p>Sawant joined pro-choice activists saying if Roe V. Wade is overturned, it will be a catastrophic step in the wrong direction and it will deny bodily autonomy to millions of women in this country.</p> <p>"Look at the Supreme Court. I didn't elect those guys and they just get to sit in their office for life and they get to tell people like me or people like my sisters and coworkers what rights we have over our body, I refuse to accept that," said union worker Logan Swan.</p> <p>Another major concern is how other rights could be in jeopardy moving forward.</p> <p>"It could stop with this and it's still unacceptable," added Swan.</p> <p>In solidarity, they called on elected leaders, voters, and organizations to fight for reproductive rights.</p> <p>"We want to stop this onslaught, we want to stop the Supreme Court, and we want people to gloriously but angrily raise hell in a positive way to stop what the Supreme Court is trying to do," said Cynthia Whetsell with Rise Up for Abortion Rights.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Hundreds protest in Olympia: leaked drafts
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SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article261044942.html
GIST	<p>Hundreds of people rallied at the Temple of Justice on the Capitol Campus in Olympia on Tuesday night in protest of the leaked drafts of a majority Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe v. Wade, published Monday night by Politico.</p> <p>The crowd that included local politicians gathered on the Washington Supreme Court steps at 5 p.m., and were later joined by another large group of protesters who marched to the temple from another location.</p> <p>State Rep. Jessica Bateman, D-Olympia, former House Rep. Beth Doglio and Rep. Laurie Dolan, D-Olympia, were joined by Gov. Jay Inslee, Lt. Gov. Denny Heck, Sen. Sam Hunt, D-Olympia, Thurston County Commissioner Carolina Mejia, and Olympia City Council member Lisa Parshley as they rallied and addressed the crowd.</p> <p>“While other states have been rolling back this fundamental right, we passed legislation to ensure Washington maintains a safety net of abortion providers, and enhanced protections for the right to choose in our state,” Bateman told the crowd. “In the 2022 legislative session, we struck down multiple bills that attempted to limit or prohibit access to abortion.”</p> <p>Bateman noted that the legislature passed House Bill 1851 this year to protect women’s rights to abortion in the state. The bill was sponsored by Rep. My-Linh Thai, D-Bellevue, and prevents those seeking abortion and those who assist people in finding access to abortions from facing legal repercussions.</p> <p>Olympia City Council member Lisa Parshley said that in the 1980s she used to work to escort women into a Planned Parenthood in Portland for counseling because people would throw rocks at women seeking services. She said her nieces take the services available to them now for granted.</p> <p>“Yesterday, that all changed,” Parshley said, referencing the leaked decision. “We just indoctrinated a new generation of women into this fight.”</p> <p>She said that while Washingtonians are “potentially” safe, people should not be afraid to engage with people in other states.</p> <p>Olympia resident Jami Heinricher said she was at the rally because she was upset about what the leaked opinion will mean.</p> <p>“I think a lot of us expected this to happen for a long time, but it’s devastating,” Heinricher said. “I don’t think people realize just how toxic and devastating this is to communities across the United States.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 WA reaches \$518M opioid settlement
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Washington-reaches-518M-settlement-with-opioid-17145489.php
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — Months into a complex trial over their role in flooding Washington with highly addictive painkillers, the nation's three largest opioid distributors agreed Tuesday to pay the state \$518 million, with the vast majority being directed toward easing the addiction epidemic.</p> <p>Attorney General Bob Ferguson announced the deal, noting that it's worth tens of millions of dollars more than Washington would have received from the companies if it had signed onto a national settlement reached last summer involving the distributors and Johnson & Johnson.</p> <p>The agreement still requires approval from a judge and from dozens of Washington cities that pursued their own cases against the distributors — McKesson Corp., Cardinal Health Inc. and AmerisourceBergen Corp.</p> <p>Under the settlement, the state would have to spend \$476 million of the total to address the opioid crisis, including on substance abuse treatment; expanding access to overdose-reversal drugs; and providing</p>

housing, job placement and other services for those struggling with addiction. The rest of the money would go toward litigation costs.

“We could have joined the overwhelming majority of states and settled with the largest opioid distributors, but we chose to fight them in court instead,” Ferguson said. “That decision to take them to court will result in significant additional resources for Washington to combat the opioid epidemic.”

The three companies announced earlier this year that 46 states had signed onto the national settlement, under which they will pay nearly \$20 billion over 18 years.

Ferguson, a Democrat, declined to join, calling what would have been the state's \$418 million share from the distributors insufficient. Instead, he decided to go to trial against the three distributors and separately against Johnson & Johnson.

The case against the distributors went to trial last November in King County Superior Court in Seattle, alleging violations of consumer protection and public nuisance laws, while the lawsuit against Johnson & Johnson is scheduled to go to trial in September.

The attorney general argued that the three companies shipped such a vast amount of drugs to Washington that it was obvious they were fueling addiction: Opioid sales in the state rose more than 500% between 1997 and 2011. In 2011, more than 112 million daily doses of all prescription opioids were dispensed in the state — enough for a 16-day supply for every resident. In 2015, eight of Washington's 39 counties had more prescriptions than residents.

The companies rejected the accusations. They said they merely supplied opioids that had been prescribed by doctors, and it wasn't their role to second-guess the prescriptions or interfere in the doctor-patient relationship.

Further, the companies argued, Washington state itself played a large role in the epidemic. In the 1990s, concerned that people in chronic pain were being undertreated, lawmakers passed the Intractable Pain Act, which made it easier to prescribe opioids.

In a written statement Tuesday, the distributors said the settlement “will further the companies' goal of achieving broad resolution of governmental opioid claims while delivering meaningful relief to communities across the United States that have been impacted by the opioid epidemic.”

Over the last two decades, the deaths of more than 500,000 Americans have been linked to overdoses of opioids, including both prescription pain killers and illicit drugs such as heroin and illegally produced fentanyl.

Across the U.S., many lawsuits filed by governments over the toll of the drugs have been resolved in recent years — most with settlements, and some with judgments or verdicts in trials. So far, drug makers, distributors and pharmacies have agreed to settlements totaling well over \$40 billion, according to an Associated Press tally.

The new Washington state settlement stands as the largest between a single state and a company or group of companies, topping a \$484 million deal announced in March between CVS and Florida.

Trials are underway in courts in West Virginia, Florida and California. A decision has not yet been issued after another trial last year in West Virginia.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Alaska Airlines faces travel chaos again
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/boeing-aerospace/travel-chaos-returns-as-alaska-airlines-blames-the-calendar/

After more than 15,000 Alaska Airlines passengers had their flights canceled Sunday and Monday, Alaska blamed the turn of the month.

Despite a massive scheduling debacle that began on April 1 — causing [hundreds of Alaska Airline flight cancellations early in the month](#) that ruined the travel plans of tens of thousands of passengers — somehow Alaska's crew schedule planners didn't foresee this coming around again on May 1.

"Month-to-month transitions can be challenging for several reasons, but particularly so when they fall on a weekend," Alaska spokesperson Bobbie Egan said via email.

Will McQuillen, chair of the Alaska Airlines council for the Air Line Pilots Association union, said the problems run deeper than the calendar.

"I gotta tell you, there's a month-to-month transition, literally every month," he said. "The fact that April and May were such a problem, that really does point to the greater issue that they're having with attracting and retaining pilots."

The union and management are deadlocked in negotiations over a new pilot contract. McQuillen said that with flight-crew shortages industrywide, Alaska continues to lose pilots to other airlines, with four or five resignations a week — "a pace we've never seen."

Alaska's management attributed the April chaos to a shortage of pilots after the omicron virus surge disrupted its pilot-training program in the spring.

In response, Alaska cut its flights by 2% through June in an effort to ensure it had sufficient pilots to fly the schedule.

But on Sunday, the calendar turned over to May 1, and Alaska's monthly transition fell apart again, at a less extreme level than in April but still bad enough. The airline canceled 53 flights on Sunday and 55 more on Monday.

"Due to our operational difficulties in April a significant number of our reserve pilots had already flown to their monthly limitation and were not available to be on call," said Alaska's Egan. "This, combined with a higher than usual absence rate, forced us into a short staffing situation and resulted in delays and cancellations."

ALPA's McQuillen doesn't buy that explanation.

"This airline has always run too lean. We use the reserves much more aggressively than other airlines do to cover flying," he said. "Other airlines are more adequately staffed to deal with the month-to-month transition."

Working the reserve pilots harder increases Alaska's productivity but leaves "no slack in the system," McQuillen added.

"While that productivity may be nice for shareholders in the short term, it certainly has the opposite effect on passengers when flights are canceled," he said. "They're not getting ahead of the problem."

Travelers on social media over the weekend offered glimpses of disarray in the airline's response to the cancellations similar to that of a month earlier: One told of 10-hour hold times on the customer service phones and the online chat function down "due to high volumes."

A poor customer support response

On Tuesday, cancellations continued, though at a lower level. Alaska canceled 33 flights, impacting another 3,790 air travelers across its network.

Of those, 15 were at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. Alaska was the only airline with cancellations there Tuesday.

One traveler, who only gave his last name, Adhikari, to preserve his privacy, described the stress a flight cancellation can cause.

He flew from Columbus, Ohio, to Seattle for a family wedding with six relatives, then learned late Monday afternoon that their direct return flight early Tuesday was canceled.

With two aging relatives unable to travel alone, he spent three hours on the phone trying to sort something out but it proved impossible to accommodate all on the same flight.

The younger relatives left on Alaska for Philadelphia, where they had to switch to American for a flight to Columbus. Meanwhile, Adhikari and the two older relatives were flying United to Columbus via Houston on a new ticket he paid for.

“I had to waste half of my day yesterday figuring this out,” Adhikari said Tuesday. “We’ll get to Columbus around midnight.”

Stephen Robinson was booked to fly home to Portland on Monday evening from San Jose, California, with his wife and their 8-year-old son, who has mobility issues. Their direct flight was canceled Sunday afternoon, however.

Robinson was stunned when Alaska rebooked the family on “a completely undoable” itinerary from San Jose to Portland via stops first in Seattle and then in Spokane, a trek that made little sense and would have taken just over 12 hours.

When the Robinsons instead rented a car, drove to San Francisco, paid for a hotel there Sunday night and then caught an early morning Alaska flight to Portland, the airline charged them \$330 in change fees because the switch to depart from a different city was “voluntary.”

“It was very disappointing,” said Robinson. “A fundamental customer service breakdown.”

Eight days ago, on April 25, Constance von Muehlen, Alaska’s executive vice president and chief operating officer, told staff in an email of “a new approach” intended to fix the scheduling problems.

“We have seen staffing or training challenges in virtually every group since we began the process of recovering our capacity back to pre-COVID levels,” von Muehlen wrote. “We need a sharper and more holistic look at capacity planning.”

She said she was centralizing crew schedule and staffing under a new resource planning team, led by Ryan St. John, who previously worked in financial planning.

“This centralized team’s work will include month-to-month schedule creation,” von Muehlen told staff.

Alaska’s Egan said this new team, which didn’t set up fast enough to flag the problems that hit May 1, will now work to “identify changes that need to be made so this doesn’t happen again.”

“The month of May will see our team continue to proactively cancel our flights eight or more days into the future,” she said. “We will be more resilient in June and beyond after we’ve re-built our schedules to better match the number of pilots.”

ALPA’s McQuillen said there may need to be a reassessment of whether the 2% schedule cut was enough.

HEADLINE	05/03 San Juan Clipper ferry cancels all sailings
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/life/travel/frs-clipper-cancels-summer-ferry-service-to-san-juan-islands/
GIST	<p>The San Juan Clipper passenger ferry between the Seattle waterfront and Friday Harbor will not sail this year.</p> <p>FRS Clipper, which operates the service, informed ticketed passengers Monday that it had canceled all sailings to San Juan Island, as well as full-day whale watching tours, for the 2022 season. The company issued automatic refunds for 1,400 booked sailings.</p> <p>Service was scheduled to begin April 29 and continue through Oct. 9. It spells further frustration for passengers bound for the San Juan Islands: The announcement comes after a loose anchor incident aboard the Yakima last week temporarily knocked the Washington State Ferries vessel out of service. WSF spokesperson Ian Sterling says the 144-car Kaleetan ferry has been working the San Juan Islands route since Saturday, keeping the service at four ships.</p> <p>FRS Clipper's decision does not affect the company's passenger ferry service between Seattle and Victoria, B.C., which resumed Apr. 15. The San Juan Clipper will continue to operate half-day whale watching tours from Seattle.</p> <p>FRS Clipper vice president of marketing Scott Meis attributed the decision to United States Coast Guard fire regulations that limit the service to 150 passengers, which Meis said would be unprofitable. The San Juan Clipper has capacity for 200 passengers.</p> <p>"We have serviced the San Juans for 35 years. This has never been an issue and all of a sudden certain regulations shifted," Meis said. "It caught us by surprise."</p> <p>Passenger ferry service between Seattle and San Juan Island is regulated by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission. An attorney for San Juan Express, Inc., a subsidiary of FRS Clipper, petitioned the commission April 13 for permission to cancel its 2022 season, as first reported by The Orcasonian.</p> <p>The petition stated that the Coast Guard informed the vessel's naval architect of the capacity restriction in March to align with new federal regulations adopted after a deadly fire aboard a dive boat off the coast of California in 2019.</p> <p>Lt. Cmdr. Keola Velasco, U.S. Coast Guard District 13 passenger vessel safety officer servicing Puget Sound, said safety is the top priority of the capacity regulation.</p> <p>"The most important deficiency is passenger safety," he said. "In the event of a fire, passengers and crew have to have the proper means to get outside the vessels."</p> <p>Regarding the steps required to resume service in 2023 or beyond, Velasco did not have a timeline.</p> <p>"FRS Clipper has to get modifications made by a shipyard," he said. "There is no timeline. We'll work with them to get to their timeline. We'll go out and verify that it does meet regulation."</p> <p>Complying with the new regulations "would take a ton of very significant vessel modifications and require drydock time," Meis said. "That wasn't going to happen in 2022."</p> <p>The commission approved the request Apr. 28. A commission spokesperson told The Seattle Times that the commission can compel regulated transportation utilities to reinstate service or forfeit their operating certificate "if an immediate need arises." Members of the public can submit comment through the commission website at utc.wa.gov/consumers/submit-comment.</p> <p>The decision has not been appealed, per the Coast Guard.</p>

	<p>The Seattle-Friday Harbor Clipper service ran at 75% capacity in summer 2021 due to the Coast Guard regulation and operated at a financial loss despite strong passenger counts.</p> <p>“We are an iconic Seattle waterfront brand working to restore the service level we had in 2019,” Meis said. Meis estimated that FRS Clipper will need three to five years of business at 2019 levels in order to turn a profit after two years of reduced revenue. The Victoria Clipper did not operate in summer 2021 due to maritime restrictions on the U.S.-Canada border and suspended winter 2021-22 service due to low passenger counts.</p> <p>Meis said the Victoria Clipper is the company’s main route, the success of which helps sustain the San Juan Clipper.</p> <p>“We are seeing strong demand and numbers are recovering,” he said. “As long as we stay the course, we’ll chart our path toward full recovery.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 L.A. abortion rights protest turns violent
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/live-updates-biden-blasts-courts-abortion-draft-ruling/
GIST	<p>A Los Angeles protest over the leaked U.S. Supreme Court draft opinion that would throw out Roe v. Wade briefly turned into a skirmish with police, who say one officer was injured.</p> <p>A citywide police tactical alert was declared after a Tuesday night confrontation near downtown’s Pershing Square.</p> <p>Authorities say about 250 people had been marching peacefully for abortion rights before the clash. LAPD Chief Michel Moore says some demonstrators threw rocks and bottles at officers. One officer was struck with a baton.</p> <p>There was no immediate word of any arrests and the crowd mostly dispersed after a large police presence was called in.</p> <p>It was the only violence reported among demonstrations held around the country. About 1,000 people gathered outside the Supreme Court in Washington D.C. Smaller gatherings were held in Atlanta; Austin, Texas and in Manhattan, where New York state Attorney General Letitia James announced that nearly two decades ago, she “walked proudly into Planned Parenthood” and had an abortion.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Abortion focus shakes election landscape
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation-politics/sudden-abortion-focus-shakes-midterm-election-landscape/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The leaked draft of a Supreme Court abortion opinion that would overturn the landmark Roe v. Wade decision is shaking the U.S. political landscape in what has been expected to be a difficult election year for Democrats.</p> <p>While the Democrats decried the draft, they suddenly have a clear, unifying message. The real possibility that abortion could be outlawed in dozens of states in the coming months could animate their dejected base — especially young voters, people of color and suburban women, who are unhappy with the pace of progress under Democratic leadership in Washington.</p> <p>Republicans, meanwhile, are struggling to contain their excitement at the prospect of winning a decades-long fight, even as they suggest Democrats are exaggerating the likely real-world impact of a Roe reversal.</p> <p>The draft opinion surfaced just as the most competitive phase of the primary season was beginning, with races unfolding Tuesday in Ohio and Indiana. While the political fallout will take months to settle, this</p>

much is clear: Rarely in the modern era has a Supreme Court case had the potential to so dramatically reshape American life and politics.

“I hope that women across this country are going to rise up and realize this isn’t theoretical anymore,” warned Michigan Sen. Debbie Stabenow.

Republicans have been fighting to ban abortion since before the Supreme Court’s 1973 Roe ruling, but on Tuesday many offered only modest estimates of the political impact of a decision eliminating the legal guarantee of the right.

The draft ruling, which the court emphasized was not final, would become the law of the land only after a formal announcement, which is expected in late June or early July. And privately, GOP strategists have worried that overturning Roe ahead of the election could trigger an anti-Republican backlash.

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham acknowledged that a sweeping change in the nation’s abortion laws might help Democrats in November, but he suggested the election would depend more on the state of the economy than the explosive social issue.

“They will have an issue to talk about. We will have an issue to talk about,” Graham said of Roe being overturned. “I think it will be a new issue, particularly at the state level, but I think most people, quite honestly are not single-issue voters.”

Voters in some states would be affected more than others.

Twenty-two states in all, largely across the South, West and Midwest, already have total or near-total bans on their books — almost all now blocked in court because of Roe. They include deep-red states with elections this fall including Idaho, Missouri, North Dakota and Utah. But they also include high-profile swing states including Pennsylvania, Arizona, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin.

A White House adviser said a Roe reversal would serve as a galvanizing force for key segments of President Joe Biden’s coalition, giving Democrats a clear message to link to the midterm elections. At the same time, the adviser, who requested anonymity to discuss internal strategies, acknowledged that an abortion change might not be enough on its own to overcome political headwinds come November.

Biden’s popularity remains weak amid increasing concerns about inflation and the direction of the country. History also suggests that the party that controls the White House almost always suffers losses in the first congressional elections of a new presidency.

In one ominous sign, grassroots Democratic fundraising, usually a mark of enthusiasm, was noticeably sluggish in the hours after the draft decision was leaked.

The Democratic fundraising platform, ActBlue, drew less than \$3 million in donations between 6:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Tuesday. By contrast, the platform took in \$71 million in the 24 hours after former Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s death.

As Democratic officials across the nation tried to sound the alarm, Republicans were quietly confident.

“There are now three things in life you can count on: death, taxes and Dems overplaying any hand,” said Republican strategist Chris Wilson, who is involved in several top elections this year. He noted that Democrats in states like New York and California wouldn’t be affected by abortion bans in Republican-led states.

For most Democrats, Wilson said, “life goes on exactly as usual.”

But there are several swing states with Republican-controlled legislatures where November elections for governor may ultimately decide a woman's right to abortion, Georgia, North Carolina, Arizona, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan, among them.

Even in states unlikely to outlaw abortions in the short term, Democrats are hopeful that a renewed focus on the issue will help their candidates overcome the party's other political challenges.

New Jersey Democratic Rep. Tom Malinowski, a top target of Republicans, cast this year's election as centering on abortion rights, arguing that a GOP majority in Congress could pursue a nationwide ban that would overrule New Jersey's law on the right.

"That's the stake in this election in November that all of us have to remember," Malinowski said in an interview. "Are we going to preserve a majority in the House of Representatives, in the Senate that will protect 50 years of settled law in this country, that will protect a woman's right to choose?"

Nevada Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto and New Hampshire Sen. Maggie Hassan, among the nation's most vulnerable Democrats this fall, also seized on the issue as critical in their upcoming elections.

"Do not underestimate what this decision would mean for women in Nevada and across the country," Cortez Masto said in an interview. "If this court issues a ruling to overturn Roe vs. Wade, it will enrage women across the country who have lived for the last almost 50 years the right to choose."

From New Hampshire, Hassan said the leaked opinion clarifies the stakes this fall for voters in her state and beyond. She called a potential Roe reversal "devastating to women all across New Hampshire, all across the country and for all people who really believe in our individual freedoms."

An abortion focus would also offer a sharp contrast with her Republican opponents, whom she described as "extremists" on abortion.

"This is really a difficult day for Granite State women, American women," Hassan said.

Some Republicans welcomed the fight.

Marjorie Dannenfelser, who leads the anti-abortion Susan B. Anthony List, said her group's fundraising has surged all year in line with excitement over a potential Roe reversal. Social conservatives have been waiting for this moment for decades, she said.

"It's a potential cultural, political sea change," she said.

Sen. Rick Scott, chairman of the Republican Senate campaign arm, was more cautious.

"I think this is an important issue to many people, but so is inflation, so is crime, so is the border," Scott said.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Starbucks: pay raises except union workers
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/03/business/economy/starbucks-howard-schultz-union-pay.html
GIST	<p>Starbucks announced Tuesday that it was raising pay and expanding training at corporate-owned locations in the United States. But it said the changes would not apply to the recently unionized stores, or to stores that may be in the process of unionizing, such as those where workers have filed a petition for a union election.</p> <p>On a call with investors to discuss the company's quarterly earnings, the chief executive, Howard Schultz, said that the spending would bring investments in workers and stores to nearly \$1 billion for the fiscal year and that it would help Starbucks keep up with customer traffic.</p>

“The investments will enable us to handle the increased demand — and deliver increased profitability — while also delivering an elevated experience to our customers and reducing strain on our partners,” Mr. Schultz said, using the company’s term for employees.

The initiative was announced as the union has won initial votes at more than 50 Starbucks stores, including several this week.

The pay increases follow a commitment to raise the company’s minimum hourly wage to \$15 this summer and will include a raise of at least 5 percent for employees with two to five years of experience, or an increase to 5 percent above the starting wage rate in their market, whichever is greater.

Employees with more than five years’ experience will receive a raise of at least 7 percent, or an increase to 10 percent above the starting wage in their market, whichever is greater.

The company will also increase pay for store managers.

The plans also call for doubling the training hours that new baristas receive, as well as additional training for existing baristas and shift supervisors.

In a formal charge filed with the National Labor Relations Board, the union representing the newly unionized Starbucks workers — Workers United, an affiliate of the Service Employees International Union — has accused the company of coercing employees who were voting in a union election by suggesting that it would withhold new benefits if they unionized.

The company said it was legally prohibited from unilaterally imposing wage and benefit increases in stores where employees have unionized or will soon vote on unionization. It noted that it must bargain with a union over any wage or benefit changes.

But labor law experts said that it could be illegal to withhold wages and benefits from only unionized employees or employees voting on a union.

Matthew Bodie, a former lawyer for the labor board who teaches law at Saint Louis University, said the announced pay increases could unlawfully taint the so-called laboratory conditions that are supposed to prevail during a union election by giving employees an incentive not to unionize.

“If Starbucks said, ‘Drop the union campaign and you’ll get this wage increase and better benefits,’ that’d clearly be illegal,” Mr. Bodie said by email. “Hard to see how this is that much different in practice.”

Mr. Bodie said the pay increases could also amount to a violation of the company’s obligation to bargain in good faith because they suggest an intention to give unionized employees a worse deal than nonunionized employees. “They’d have to at least offer this package to the union,” Mr. Bodie added.

Reggie Borges, a Starbucks spokesman, did not say whether the company would make the same proposals announced Tuesday in negotiations with unionized workers but said, “Where Starbucks is required to engage in collective bargaining, Starbucks will always negotiate in good faith.”

Starbucks also said it planned to post leaflets in stores to keep employees informed, in which the company says that the outcome of collective bargaining is uncertain and risky. “Through collective bargaining, wages, benefits and working conditions may improve, diminish or stay the same,” says one of the informational sheets to be posted in stores.

Such messaging is common among employers facing union campaigns, but labor experts say it is misleading because workers are highly unlikely to see their compensation drop as a result of collective bargaining.

HEADLINE	05/03 Original Roe v. Wade ruling was leaked too
SOURCE	https://www.npr.org/2022/05/03/1096097236/roe-wade-original-ruling-leak
GIST	<p>The news site Politico sent shockwaves across the country last night when it published what appears to be an initial draft majority opinion — written by Justice Samuel Alito and reportedly circulated inside the court — suggesting that the U.S. Supreme Court intends to strike down <i>Roe v. Wade</i>.</p> <p>Chief Justice John Roberts confirmed the authenticity of the document in a statement on Tuesday morning, but says it does not represent the court's final position. He's also ordered the Supreme Court marshal to investigate the leak.</p> <p>Striking down Roe effectively would end federal protection for abortion rights, opening the door for states to ban or restrict access to the procedure. While such a ruling would have enormous consequences, legal experts and onlookers alike are also struck by how the draft opinion made its way into public view in the first place.</p> <p>Leaks of any kind are rare at the Supreme Court, and Totenberg says there hasn't been such a massive breach in modern history. She called it a "bomb at the court" that undermines everything the body stands for internally and institutionally, including its members' trust in their law clerks and in each other.</p> <p>"No fully-formed draft opinion has been leaked to the press or outside the court," Totenberg says. "Once or twice there may have been leaks that say how is something going to turn out, or after-the-fact that somebody may have changed his or her mind. But this is a full-blown, Pentagon Papers-type compromise of the court's work."</p> <p>There were actually two <i>Roe</i>-related leaks</p> <p>There have indeed been leaks at the court before, albeit of a different scale. One of them actually was about the case at the heart of today's conversation: In 1973, the original <i>Roe</i> decision was leaked to the press before the court had formally announced it.</p> <p>Jonathan Peters, a media law professor at the University of Georgia, noted in a Twitter thread that there were actually two <i>Roe</i>-related leaks in the 1970s.</p> <p>First, the <i>Washington Post</i> published a story about the court's internal deliberations, including a June 1972 memo from Justice William O. Douglas to his colleagues that was mysteriously leaked.</p> <p>Seven months later, <i>Time</i> magazine published the final decision and vote details just hours before the court was due to announce it — the result of an early scoop and a delayed ruling.</p> <p>A Supreme Court clerk named Larry Hammond told <i>Time</i> staff reporter David Beckwith, a law school acquaintance, that the <i>Roe</i> ruling was coming, according to lawyer and author James Robenalt, who detailed the incident in a Washington Post column yesterday.</p> <p>Hammond gave Beckwith the information "on background," and it was only to be reported once the opinion came down from the court. But the ruling was slightly delayed, and that week's magazine ended up hitting newsstands a few hours too soon.</p> <p>The "20-second rule" and a double-cross</p> <p>Then-Chief Justice Warren Burger was reportedly furious about the leak, demanding a meeting with <i>Time</i>'s editors to tell them off. He also sent a letter to the other justices demanding that the leaker be identified and punished, and threatened to subject law clerks to lie-detector tests if no one came forward, Robenalt said.</p> <p>According to Peters, this was also the origin of Burger's "20-second rule," in which any law clerk caught talking to a reporter would be fired in under half a minute.</p>

Hammond offered his resignation to his boss, Justice Lewis Powell. But Powell didn't accept it, and instead called Burger to tell him "that Hammond had been double-crossed," writes Robenalt, who interviewed Hammond [for his 2015 book](#) about the political and cultural events of January 1973.

Burger wasn't quick to forgive the magazine, but accepted Hammond's apology and let him stay on as Powell's clerk. He continued in that role for an additional term before leaving the court to join the Watergate Special Prosecution Force.

"The story of Hammond's close call became legend to other clerks on the court at the time and has been passed down as a cautionary tale over time," Robenalt added.

Five decades later, the court is once again grappling with an internal leak about an unreleased ruling on matters concerning reproductive rights.

Totenberg had predicted on *Morning Edition* that the court would try internally to figure out who leaked the document, noting that while such a leak isn't a crime, "it's a career-ender for whoever did."

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HEADLINE	05/03 CDC tracked phones for pattern analysis
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/m7vymn/cdc-tracked-phones-location-data-curfews
GIST	<p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) bought access to location data harvested from tens of millions of phones in the United States to perform analysis of compliance with curfews, track patterns of people visiting K-12 schools, and specifically monitor the effectiveness of policy in the Navajo Nation, according to CDC documents obtained by Motherboard. The documents also show that although the CDC used COVID-19 as a reason to buy access to the data more quickly, it intended to use it for more general CDC purposes.</p> <p>Location data is information on a device's location sourced from the phone, which can then show where a person lives, works, and where they went. The sort of data the CDC bought was aggregated—meaning it was designed to follow trends that emerge from the movements of groups of people—but researchers have repeatedly raised concerns with how location data can be deanonymized and used to track specific people.</p> <p>The documents reveal the expansive plan the CDC had last year to use location data from a highly controversial data broker. SafeGraph, the company the CDC paid \$420,000 for access to one year of data to, includes Peter Thiel and the former head of Saudi intelligence among its investors. Google banned the company from the Play Store in June.</p> <p>The CDC used the data for monitoring curfews, with the documents saying that SafeGraph's data "has been critical for ongoing response efforts, such as hourly monitoring of activity in curfew zones or detailed counts of visits to participating pharmacies for vaccine monitoring." The documents date from 2021.</p> <p>Zach Edwards, a cybersecurity researcher who closely follows the data marketplace, told Motherboard in an online chat after reviewing the documents that "The CDC seems to have purposefully created an open-ended list of use cases, which included monitoring curfews, neighbor to neighbor visits, visits to churches, schools and pharmacies, and also a variety of analysis with this data specifically focused on 'violence.'" (The document doesn't stop at churches; it mentions "places of worship.")</p> <p>Motherboard obtained the documents through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with the CDC.</p> <p>The documents contain a long list of what the CDC describes as 21 different "potential CDC use cases for data." They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Track patterns of those visiting K-12 schools by the school and compare to 2019; compare with epi metrics [Environmental Performance Index] if possible."

- “Examination of the correlation of mobility patterns data and rise in COVID-19 cases [...] Movement restrictions (Border closures, inter-regional and night curfews) to show compliance.”
- “Examination of the effectiveness of public policy on [the] Navajo Nation.”

At the start of the pandemic, cell phone location data was seen as a potentially useful tool. Multiple media organizations, including the *New York Times*, used location data provided by companies in the industry to show [where people were traveling to once lockdowns started to lift](#), or highlight that [poorer communities were unable to shelter in place as much as richer ones](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic as a whole has been a flashpoint in a broader culture war, with conservatives and anti-vaccine groups protesting against government mask and vaccine mandates. They've also expressed a specific paranoia that vaccine passports would be used as a tracking or surveillance tool, framing vaccine refusal as a civil liberties issue. Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s Children's Health Defense, one of the more influential and monied anti-vaccine groups in the U.S., has promoted fears that digital vaccine certificates could be used to surveil citizens. QAnon promoter Dustin Nemos wrote on Telegram in December that vaccine passports are "a Trojan horse being used to create a completely new type of controlled and surveilled society in which the freedom we enjoy today will be a distant memory."

Against that inflamed backdrop, the use of cell phone location data for such a wide variety of tracking measures, even if effective for becoming better informed on the pandemic's spread or for informing policy, is likely to be controversial. It's also likely to give anti-vaccine groups a real-world data point on which to pin their darkest warnings.

The procurement documents say that “This is an URGENT COVID-19 PR [procurement request],” and asks for the purchase to be expedited.

But some of the use cases are not explicitly linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. One reads “Research points of interest for physical activity and chronic disease prevention such as visits to parks, gyms, or weight management businesses.”

Another section of the document elaborates on the location data's use for non-COVID-19 related programs.

“CDC also plans to use mobility data and services acquired through this acquisition to support non-COVID-19 programmatic areas and public health priorities across the agency, including but not limited to travel to parks and greenspaces, physical activity and mode of travel, and population migration before, during, and after natural disasters,” it reads. “The mobility data obtained under this contract will be available for CDC agency-wide use and will support numerous CDC priorities.”

The CDC did not respond to multiple emails requesting comment on which use cases it did deploy SafeGraph data for.

SafeGraph is part of the ballooning location industry, and SafeGraph has [previously shared datasets containing 18 million cell phones from the United States](#). The documents say this acquisition is for data that is geographically representative, “i.e., derived from at least 20 million active cellphone users per day across the United States.”

Generally, companies in this industry ask, or pay, app developers to include location data gathering code in their apps. The location data then funnels up to companies who may resell the raw location data outright or package it into products.

SafeGraph sells both. On the developed product side SafeGraph has several different products. “Places” concerns points of interest (POIs) such as where particular stores or buildings are located. “Patterns” is based on mobile phone location data that can show for how long people visit a location, and “Where they came from” and “Where else they go,” [according to SafeGraph's website](#). More recently SafeGraph has started offering aggregated transaction data, showing how much consumers typically spend at specific

locations, under the “Spend” product. SafeGraph sells its products to a wide range of industries, such as real estate, insurance, and advertising. These products include aggregated data on movements and spends, rather than the location of specific devices. Motherboard previously bought a set of SafeGraph location data for \$200. The data was aggregated, meaning it was not supposed to pinpoint the movements of specific devices and hence people, but at the time, Edwards said “In my opinion the SafeGraph data is way beyond any safe thresholds [around anonymity].” Edwards pointed to a search result in SafeGraph’s data portal that displayed data related to a specific doctor’s office, showing how finely tuned the company’s data can be. Theoretically, an attacker could use that data to then attempt to unmask the specific users, [something which researchers have repeatedly demonstrated is possible](#).

In January 2019, the Illinois Department of Transportation bought such data from SafeGraph that related to over five million phones, [activist organization the Electronic Frontier Foundation \(EFF\) previously found](#).

The CDC documents show that the agency bought access to SafeGraph’s “U.S. Core Place Data,” “Weekly Patterns Data,” and “Neighborhood Patterns Data. That last product includes information such as home dwelling time, and is aggregated by state and census block.

“SafeGraph offers visitor data at the Census Block Group level that allows for extremely accurate insights related to age, gender, race, citizenship status, income, and more,” one of the CDC documents reads.

Both SafeGraph and the CDC have previously touched on their partnership, but not in the detail that is revealed in the documents. The CDC [published a study in September 2020](#) which looked at whether people around the country were following stay-at-home orders, which appeared to use SafeGraph data.

[SafeGraph wrote in a blog post in April 2020](#) that “To play our part in the fight against the COVID-19 health crisis—and its devastating impact on the global economy—we decided to expand our program further, making our foot traffic data free for non-profit organizations and government agencies at the local, state, and federal level.” Multiple location data companies touted their data as a potential mitigation to the pandemic during its peak in the United States, and provided data to government and media organizations.

A year later, the CDC purchased access to the data because SafeGraph no longer wanted to provide it for free, according to the documents. The Data Use Agreement for the in-kind provided data was set to expire on March 31, 2021, the documents add. The data was still important to access as the U.S. opened up, the CDC argued in the documents.

“CDC has interest in continued access to this mobility data as the country opens back up. This data is used by several teams/groups in the response and have been resulting in deeper insights into the pandemic as it pertains to human behavior,” one section reads.

Researchers at the EFF separately obtained documents concerning the CDC’s purchase of similar location data products from a company called Cubeiq as well as the SafeGraph documents. The EFF shared those documents with Motherboard. They showed that the CDC also asked to speed up the purchase of Cubeiq’s data because of COVID-19, and intended to use it for non-COVID-19 purposes. The documents also listed the same potential use-cases for Cubeiq’s data as in the SafeGraph documents.

Google [banned SafeGraph from its Google Play Store in June](#). This meant that any app developers using SafeGraph’s code had to remove it from their apps, or face having their app removed from the store. It is not entirely clear how effective this ban has been: SafeGraph has [previously said it obtains location data via Veraset](#), a spin-off company which interfaces with the app developers.

SafeGraph did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

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SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/stocks-and-bonds-are-falling-in-lockstep-at-pace-unseen-in-decades-11651551170
GIST	<p>Stocks and bonds are falling in tandem at a pace not seen in decades, leaving investors with few places to hide from the market volatility.</p> <p>Through Friday, the S&P 500 was down 13% for 2022 and the Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate bond index—largely U.S. Treasuries, highly rated corporate bonds and mortgage-backed securities—was off 9.5%. That puts them on track for their biggest simultaneous drop in Dow Jones Market Data going back to 1976. The only other time both indexes dropped for the year was in 1994, when the bond index declined 2.9% and the S&P 500 fell 1.5%.</p> <p>It is the latest dilemma for investors who are struggling to manage the large swings roiling financial markets around the globe. This year's declines have dealt a blow to the 60/40 portfolio model—a mix of 60% stocks and 40% bonds that has long been advertised as offering strong returns and hedging against the expected occasional pullback in stocks, which typically are viewed as being much riskier than bonds.</p> <p>That hedge has evaporated this year. Investors have dumped both stocks and bonds as the Federal Reserve has embarked on a campaign to raise interest rates to combat inflation, which is at a 40-year high. Even the safest investments, Treasuries, have fallen sharply.</p> <p>Some investors are reaching into commodities markets, including John Cunnison, chief investment officer at Baker Boyer Bank, who has increased bets on stocks tied to metals and natural resources. But concerns about commodity prices after a sharp rally driven by inflation concerns make others leery.</p> <p>“There’s no silver bullet,” said Mr. Cunnison. “Everywhere we could, we were trying to find diversifying assets.”</p> <p>The rout in the bond market deepened Monday, with the yield on the 10-year Treasury note hitting 3% for the first time since 2018. Some investors warn it is early yet—and the tumble in bond prices may continue. During the Fed’s last rate-hiking cycle—which concluded in December 2018—Treasury yields didn’t touch 3% until late that year, near the end of the cycle.</p> <p>The Fed is poised Wednesday to raise interest rates by half a percentage point, which would mark the first increase of that magnitude in 22 years. Investors are expecting more interest-rate increases ahead: Interest-rate derivatives show investors expect the Fed to increase its benchmark federal-funds rate to above 3% next year, from its current level of between 0.25% and 0.5%.</p> <p>Mr. Cunnison said he has been trimming exposure to bonds that mature much later in time and that are more sensitive to interest rates. The rally in commodity prices this year—from oil to soybeans and oats—has helped stoke fears about inflation and skepticism about how the Fed can tame it without pushing the economy into a recession.</p> <p>High inflation has also made some investors reluctant to pour more money into bonds despite the turmoil in the stock market. Inflation can chip away at the purchasing power of the fixed payments that bonds offer. As a result, some investors said they were going to hang on to stocks through the volatility.</p> <p>The S&P 500 just finished its worst month since March 2020, while many technology stocks have been harder hit. The Nasdaq Composite is down almost 20% this year, and shares of many of the tech heavyweights that have driven the market higher in recent years are sitting on double-digit percentage losses.</p> <p>“There’s been a lot of days when I open up my Bloomberg screen and everything is red and I have to squint to see what the green number is,” said Josh Kutin, head of asset allocation for North America at Columbia Threadneedle Investments, who oversees about \$90 billion in assets.</p>

Mr. Kutin said he is still holding more stocks than the benchmarks he follows, because he expects high inflation will continue to ding bond prices. He said investments in corners of the market like commodities have helped protect some of the firm's portfolios.

Some individual investors, particularly those who rely on their portfolio returns for income during retirement, have been burned by the recent volatility. Still, despite the turbulence, U.S. stock funds have drawn more than \$81 billion in assets this year through late April, according to data from EPFR. Bond and money-market funds had lost more than a combined \$250 billion.

Fred Wallace, a 67-year-old retiree who lives in Los Angeles, said he has sold some of his bonds and now keeps more of his portfolio in cash and stocks instead. He is bearish on bonds.

"I have maintained a pretty strong equity position that has kind of trickled north over the past couple of years," said Mr. Wallace.

His allocation to stocks has edged up to around 70% recently, up from roughly 65% at the end of 2020. He is willing to weather the volatility.

"I believe the market will always come back," he said.

Still, some investors say it isn't wise to throw in the towel on bonds, despite the big losses this year.

The Fed's outlook on interest rates may shift rapidly as the economy evolves. It is still unclear how the rising rates will ripple through the jobs market and [affect consumer spending](#). Already, it looks like some Americans are growing more price sensitive to big-ticket items. And fresh data last week showed that the [economy contracted last quarter](#) for the first time since the onset of the pandemic.

That will have implications for the bond market, said Anna Rathbun, Cleveland-based chief investment officer of CBIZ Investment Advisory Services.

"I wouldn't give up on fixed income," said Ms. Rathbun. "Anything that goes straight up, sometimes goes straight down," she said, pointing to the sharp rise in yields this year as bond prices have dropped.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Retirees back at work; rising inflation costs
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/retirees-work-inflation-rising-costs/281-96087891-296b-43cf-823f-947bad18a071
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — With inflation in the U.S. hitting a 40-year-high in March at 8.5%, some retirees are making the decision to head back to work to help make ends meet.</p> <p>Retired administrative assistant Suzanne Albrecht is one of them.</p> <p>"I was doing fine. I had saved for 20 years for retirement," said Albrecht who spent most of her career at Mercer Island High School and predicated her retirement on the ability to substitute part-time.</p> <p>But it was money she thought she could use on vacations with her family. Instead, she's spending retirement frustrated and worried.</p> <p>"I never thought at 73, I would be making these kinds of choices," Albrecht said.</p> <p>Those choices include not driving, limited presents for her grandkids and buying generic brands just to pay the bills.</p> <p>Taking a closer look at the math even with an \$80 increase in social security from the cost of living adjustment, Albrecht takes home about \$1800. An additional \$1100 from retirement totaling \$2900 a</p>

month. Rent on her two-bedroom Maple Valley apartment, which she downsized to last year, is \$2330 a month, leaving Albrecht with less than \$600 a month.

"The money is going to run out at this point because I've got to dip into it to the tune of \$700/\$800 a month," she said.

That's forced Albrecht back into the classroom proctoring AP exams.

While she says she's grateful for the work, she knows she's not alone.

The U.S. labor force participation rate for those 65 and older is at 19.1% this year, up slightly from 18.8% last year but down from 19.7% in 2020.

Experts say it's a trend that's been ticking upwards in the last decade.

"We're seeing baby boomer generation participating more, delaying retirement," said Washington State Labor Economist Anneliese Vance- Sherman, who added it's hard to blame the trend entirely on inflation with so many knowns including the pandemic.

"We're beginning to see people come back in. How much of that is because of inflation? And how much of that is because the uncertainty and threat of the pandemic have passed?" Vance-Sherman said.

No matter why there is some good news for retirees looking to get back into the game.

"Seattle is at 3.1% unemployment, so it's an employee market right now," said Josh Warborg, a staffing specialist at Robert Half.

Warborg's advice is to be selective, go for flexible jobs and start with doing something you either enjoy or did before retirement if you can.

"We're seeing 71% of hiring managers planning to add people in the first half of 2022," said Warborg.

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HEADLINE	05/03 REAL ID deadline a year away
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/travel/real-id-deadline-may-2023/281-8644c4d5-bd5d-46d6-8613-763db05f1585
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The deadline for airline passengers to have a REAL ID is one year away as of May 3.</p> <p>The deadline marks the date when those without a REAL ID-compliant license or passport will not be able to board domestic flights, visit a military base or enter some federal buildings.</p> <p>Currently, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) lists regular driver's licenses and state photo ID cards as acceptable forms of identification at airport checkpoints, but it notes that all such IDs must be REAL ID compliant by the May 3, 2023, deadline for anyone seeking to fly within the U.S.</p> <p>People are getting compliant IDs as they renew, but it takes time and the process was slowed by the pandemic, with many state agencies operating at limited capacity.</p> <p>All 50 U.S. states, along with the District of Columbia and four out of five U.S. territories, are covered by the REAL ID Act and must comply with Real ID requirements.</p> <p>Congress passed the REAL ID Act in 2005, following a recommendation from the 9/11 commission. The change led to minimum security standards for state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards.</p>

In 2013, the Department of Homeland Security announced REAL ID requirements for air travelers would take effect in 2016. Enforcement was delayed several times, most recently in April 2021 when Homeland Security pushed the [deadline back to May 3, 2023, due to the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

When it announced the latest deadline extension, Homeland Security said 43% of state driver's licenses and IDs were REAL ID compliant.

In 2020, an [estimated 83 million American adults said](#) they would not have any form of TSA-accepted identification once the deadline passes.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Putin shows restraint, cautious tactics?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/03/world/europe/russia-ukraine-war-nato.html
GIST	<p>Russia's war against Ukraine has leveled cities, killed tens of thousands of people and forced millions of others from their homes.</p> <p>But quietly, some military analysts and Western officials are asking why the onslaught has not been even worse.</p> <p>Russia could be going after Ukrainian railways, roads and bridges more aggressively to try to stanch the flow of Western weapons to the front line. It could have bombed more of the infrastructure around the capital, Kyiv, to make it harder for Western leaders to visit President Volodymyr Zelensky in shows of unity and resolve. And it could be doing far more to inflict pain on the West, whether by cyberattack, sabotage or more cutoffs of energy exports to Europe.</p> <p>Part of the reason appears to be sheer incompetence: The opening weeks of the war demonstrated vividly that Russia's military was far less capable than believed before the invasion. But American and European officials also say that President Vladimir V. Putin's tactics in recent weeks have appeared to be remarkably cautious, marked by a slow-moving offensive in eastern Ukraine, a restrained approach to taking out Ukrainian infrastructure and an avoidance of actions that could escalate the conflict with NATO.</p> <p>The apparent restraint on the ground stands in contrast to the bombast on Russian state television, where Moscow is described as being locked in an existential fight against the West and where the use of nuclear weapons is openly discussed. The issue is whether, as the war grinds on, Mr. Putin will change tack and intensify the war.</p> <p>That is a particularly urgent question ahead of the Victory Day holiday in Russia next Monday, when Mr. Putin traditionally presides over a grandiose parade marking the Soviet triumph over Nazi Germany and gives a militaristic speech. Ben Wallace, the British defense secretary, predicted last week that Mr. Putin would use the speech for an official declaration of war and a mass mobilization of the Russian people.</p> <p>American and European officials say that they have not seen any on-the-ground movements that would show any much larger push with additional troops beginning on May 9 or soon after. Those officials now expect a slower, grinding campaign inside Ukraine. But they do not disagree that Mr. Putin could use the speech to declare a wider war and a deeper national effort to fight it.</p> <p>For the moment, Mr. Putin appears to be in a military holding pattern, one that is allowing Ukraine to regroup and stock up on Western weaponry. On Monday, a senior Pentagon official called Russia's latest offensive in eastern Ukraine "very cautious, very tepid." In Russia, there is grumbling that the military is fighting with one hand tied behind its back, with the strategy and aims not understood by the public.</p> <p>"This is a strange, special kind of war," Dmitri Trenin, until recently the director of the Carnegie Moscow Center think tank, said in a phone interview from outside Moscow. "Russia has set some rather strict limits for itself, and this is not being explained in any way — which raises a lot of questions, first of all, among Russian citizens."</p>

Mr. Trenin is one of the few analysts from his think tank, [shuttered last month by the Russian government](#), who chose to stay in Russia after the war began. He said that he was struggling to explain why the Kremlin was fighting at “less than half strength.”

Why isn’t Russia bombing more bridges and railway networks, he asked, when they are allowing Ukraine’s military to receive more of the West’s increasingly lethal weapons deliveries with every passing day? Why are Western leaders — [like House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Sunday](#) — still able to visit Kyiv safely?

“I find this strange, and I can’t explain it,” Mr. Trenin said.

To be sure, Russian missile strikes have targeted infrastructure across Ukraine, including an [important bridge](#) in the country’s southwest on Monday and [the runway of the Odesa airport](#) on Saturday. But across the Atlantic, officials and analysts are asking themselves similar questions as Mr. Trenin.

For weeks, officials in Washington have discussed why the Russian military has not been more aggressive in trying to destroy the supply lines that send Western arms shipments into Ukraine. Part of the answer, officials say, is that Ukrainian air defense continues to threaten Russian aircraft, and the deeper Russian planes go into Ukraine the greater the chance they are going to be shot down.

Russia has also struggled with its precision munitions — missiles or rockets with guidance systems. Many of those weapons have failed to work properly, and Russian supplies of the weapons are limited. Strikes on rail lines or moving convoys must be very precise to be effective.

Other officials have argued that Moscow is eager to avoid destroying Ukraine’s infrastructure too severely, in the possibly misguided hope that it can still take control of the country. Russia would be stuck with a huge rebuilding job if it took over cities devastated by its own bombing.

A senior American defense official said that Mr. Putin may have avoided destroying Ukraine’s rail network because he did not want to hurt his own ability to move equipment and troops around the country. The Russians have been more focused on destroying weapon storage areas than the rail network.

American officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private military and intelligence assessments.

Then there is the question of why Russia hasn’t hit back harder against the West. The Kremlin narrative is of an existential war with NATO being fought on Ukrainian soil, but Russia is the one taking military losses while the West keeps a safe distance and supplies weapons that kill Russian soldiers.

“A lot of people in this town are asking why they haven’t retaliated yet,” said Samuel Charap, a former U.S. State Department official in Washington and a Russia analyst with the RAND Corporation. “It seems low probability that the U.S. and its allies will experience no blowback from having put this many Russian soldiers in their graves.”

Russia has the tools to do widespread damage to the West. The gas shortages caused by the [cyberattack on the Colonial Pipeline last year](#) showed the disruption that Russian hacking can inflict on American infrastructure. Berlin has warned that a cutoff of Russian gas [could throw the German economy into a recession](#).

And then there is Moscow’s world-leading nuclear arsenal, with an [estimated](#) 5,977 warheads: Their catastrophic capability is being hyped in ever-shriller terms in the Russian media.

“You thought you could destroy us with other people’s hands and observe from the sidelines from a safe distance?” Sergei Mironov, an outspoken hawk in Russia’s Parliament, said on Saturday, claiming that his

country's [new intercontinental ballistic missile](#) could destroy Britain in a single strike. "It won't work, gentlemen — you'll have to pay for it all in full!" he added.

Mr. Putin has also warned of retaliation, but he values ambiguity, too. Last year, he said that those crossing a "red line" would face an "asymmetric, fast and tough" response — an indication that the response would come at a time and place of Moscow's choosing.

"Nobody really knows where the red line is," Mr. Charap, the analyst, said. "I don't even think the Russians know, because we are in such uncharted waters."

American and allied officials have debated why Mr. Putin hasn't tried widespread or more damaging cyberstrikes. Some say that Mr. Putin has been effectively deterred. The Russian military, struggling to make gains in Ukraine, cannot handle a wider war with NATO and does not want to give the alliance any excuse to enter the war more directly.

Others argue that a cyberstrike on a NATO country is one of the few cards Mr. Putin can play and that he may be waiting for a later stage in his campaign to do that.

While Mr. Putin has been unafraid of escalating the rhetoric, his actions have suggested he does not want to do anything that could prompt a wider war.

"The general sense is that he wants to snatch some sort of victory out of this debacle of his," said the American defense official, suggesting that Mr. Putin was not interested in "borrowing more trouble."

Before the invasion on Feb. 24, Mr. Trenin, of the Carnegie center, predicted that the Ukrainian military would put up a fierce resistance and that Mr. Putin would discover a lack of political support for Russia in Ukraine. On that, Mr. Trenin turned out to be right.

What he was wrong about, Mr. Trenin said, was the information that aides and commanders would provide to Mr. Putin about Russia's capabilities, which turned out to be flawed.

Mr. Trenin says he still sees Mr. Putin as fundamentally rational, rather than someone willing to engage in a nuclear war, with a "maniacal determination to destroy mankind."

"That would not be a mistake — that would be a total departure from rationality," Mr. Trenin said. "I hope that now I am not wrong."

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HEADLINE	05/03 Beijing tightens rules; residents on edge
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/03/world/asia/beijing-china-lockdown-covid.html
GIST	<p>Residents in Beijing remained on edge on Tuesday as the authorities announced new measures to contain a small but growing outbreak of coronavirus cases, in an effort to avoid a lockdown like the one imposed in Shanghai.</p> <p>"I feel pessimistic," said Yang Hui, 37, a sales manager in Beijing. "What happened in Shanghai was a cautionary tale."</p> <p>Ms. Yang said that she had already prepared for the possibility of an indefinite lockdown. Last week, she ordered several boxes of instant noodles and cat litter after a positive case was detected near her home.</p> <p>Fortunately for Ms. Yang, authorities have stopped short of instituting a citywide lockdown — at least so far. But she said the government's containment measures were increasingly disrupting her life in other ways.</p>

Twice in the last week, she dutifully lined up with neighbors outside her apartment building to participate in the government's mandatory mass testing campaign. Last week, she canceled dinner plans with friends because she did not feel like getting the Covid test that the city requires for dining in restaurants.

Then, officials banned dining at restaurants altogether and ordered entertainment venues to close. The reopening of schools, which were closed ahead of a national holiday, has been postponed for at least one week. And residents must now show proof of testing negative within the last 48 hours just to enter public spaces, including public transportation.

"It's hard to plan anything in advance," said Ms. Yang, who is now scrambling to arrange child care for her two children. "I'm so tired of Covid and the so-called 'zero Covid' strategy."

Beijing on Tuesday reported 53 new locally transmitted cases, bringing the total from the recent outbreak to 453. The case count remains relatively low compared with that of Shanghai, which reported 5,669 new cases. At the height of its outbreak last month, Shanghai was reporting as many as 27,000 cases a day.

In Beijing on Tuesday, the government ordered the closure of indoor museum exhibitions, including those at the Palace Museum, one of the city's marquee tourist destinations. Commuters entering and leaving Beijing now are also required to show proof of a negative coronavirus test taken within the last 48 hours, or a green health code on the government app that China uses to track an individual's risk of Covid.

For many residents, the restrictions put a damper on the five-day national holiday that started on Saturday. Some people found workarounds. Over the weekend, crowds gathered on the banks of Liangma River, which winds through the center of the city, for picnics and foot massages.

But the revelry didn't last long. By Tuesday, tall barriers had been erected along the river to block gatherings.

"It's a shame," said Jenny Fan, 29, who lives in Beijing and saw the crowds over the weekend. "People just want to have fun during this difficult time."

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HEADLINE	05/04 Beijing closes subway stations stem Covid
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/beijing-closes-10-subway-stations-stem-covid-spread-84487840
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- Beijing on Wednesday closed around 10% of the stations in its vast subway system as an additional measure against the spread of coronavirus.</p> <p>The subway authority in a brief message said only that the measure to shut 40 mostly downtown stations was being taken as part of epidemic control measures. No date for resumption of service was given.</p> <p>Beijing has been on high alert for the spread of COVID-19, with restaurants and bars limited to takeout only, gyms closed and classes suspended indefinitely. Major tourist sites in the city, including the Forbidden City and the Beijing Zoo, have closed their indoor exhibition halls and are operating at only partial capacity.</p> <p>A few communities where cases were discovered have been isolated. People residing in "controlled" areas have been told to stay within city limits, including 12 areas deemed high-risk and another 35 considered medium-risk.</p> <p>City residents are required to undergo three tests throughout the week as authorities seek to detect and isolate cases without imposing the sort of sweeping lockdowns seen in Shanghai and elsewhere. A negative test result obtained within the previous 48 hours is required to gain entry to most public spaces.</p> <p>Beijing on Wednesday recorded just 51 new cases, five of them asymptomatic.</p>

The subway closings should have relatively little impact on city life, with China observing the Labor Day holiday this week and many commuters in the city of 21 million already working from home.

In one downtown neighborhood categorized as high-risk on Wednesday, the streets were practically deserted apart from a few delivery drivers on scooters and the occasional pedestrian and car.

All businesses were shut except for supermarkets and fruit and vegetable stores. Outsiders generally avoid high-risk areas to avoid the possibility of their presence registering on the tracing apps installed on virtually all mobile phones, creating potential problems for future access to public areas.

While taking a lighter touch in Beijing, China has overall stuck to its strict “zero-COVID” approach that restricts travel, tests entire cities and sets up sprawling facilities to try to isolate every infected person. Lockdowns start with buildings and neighborhoods but become citywide if the virus spreads widely.

That has caused the most disruption in Shanghai, where authorities are slowly easing restrictions that have confined most of the city’s 26 million people to their apartments, housing compounds or immediate neighborhoods for close to a month, and in some cases longer.

Shanghai reported another 4,982 cases Wednesday, all but 260 of them asymptomatic, along with an additional 16 deaths. That continues a steady decline in China’s largest city which recorded a daily peak of 27,605 new cases nearly three weeks ago on April 13.

The surprisingly low death toll amid an outbreak of more than 400,000 cases in the city that is home to China’s main stock market and biggest port has sparked questions about how such deaths are tallied.

The rigid and widely derided restrictions have led to shortages of food and medical aid along with a wider — though likely temporary — impact on the national economy. Desperate, outraged citizens have confronted authorities at barricades and online, screamed out of their windows and banged pots and pans in a sign of their frustration and anger.

Communist authorities who tolerate no dissent have sought to scrub such protests from the internet and blamed the protests, including the banging of cooking implements, on agitation by unidentified “foreign anti-China forces.”

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HEADLINE	05/03 China aircraft carrier trains in Pacific
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-aircraft-carrier-combat-training-western-pacific-84464861
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- China's Liaoning aircraft carrier group has embarked on a “realistic combat” training mission in the Western Pacific, the Chinese navy said Tuesday.</p> <p>In a posting on its social media site, the navy said the mission is routine, adheres to all international laws and practices and is “not directed at any third parties.”</p> <p>However, the mission underscores the growing role of China’s naval forces as Beijing seeks to supplant the U.S. as the preeminent military power in Asia.</p> <p>China operates the world’s largest navy by number of ships, while the U.S. maintains an edge in aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines as well as in numbers of bases and allies in the region, where the competition is focused on the strategically vital South China Sea.</p> <p>The Liaoning was originally purchased as a hulk from Ukraine and entirely refurbished. China has since added a second entirely home-built carrier, the Shandong, and is believed to be at work on at least two more.</p>

	Exercising under realistic wartime conditions has become a focus of China's military in recent years, in apparent recognition of its lack of combat experience going back four decades.
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HEADLINE	05/03 Russia forces storm Mariupol steel mill
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-official-russia-plans-annex-parts-eastern-ukraine-84460964
GIST	<p>ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine -- Russian forces Tuesday began storming the steel mill containing the last pocket of resistance in Mariupol, Ukrainian defenders said, just as scores of civilians evacuated from the bombed-out plant reached relative safety and told of days and nights filled with dread and despair from constant shelling.</p> <p>Osnat Lubrani, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Ukraine, said that thanks to the evacuation effort over the weekend, 101 people — including women, the elderly, and 17 children, the youngest 6 months old — were able to emerge from the bunkers under the Azovstal steelworks and “see the daylight after two months.”</p> <p>One evacuee said she went to sleep at the plant every night afraid she wouldn’t wake up.</p> <p>“You can’t imagine how scary it is when you sit in the bomb shelter, in a damp and wet basement, and it is bouncing and shaking,” 54-year-old Elina Tsybulchenko said upon arriving in the Ukrainian-controlled city of Zaporizhzhia, about 140 miles (230 kilometers) northwest of Mariupol, in a convoy of buses and ambulances.</p> <p>She said if the shelter were hit by a bomb like the ones that left the huge craters she saw on the two occasions she ventured outside, “all of us would be done.”</p> <p>Evacuees, a few of whom were in tears, made their way from the buses into a tent offering some of the comforts long denied them during their weeks underground, including hot food, diapers and connections to the outside world. Mothers fed small children. Some of the evacuees browsed racks of donated clothing, including new underwear.</p> <p>The news for those left behind was more grim. Ukrainian commanders said Russian forces backed by tanks began storming the sprawling plant, which includes a maze of tunnels and bunkers spread out over 11 square kilometers (4 square miles).</p> <p>How many Ukrainian fighters were holed up inside was unclear, but the Russians put the number at about 2,000 in recent weeks, and 500 were reported to be wounded. A few hundred civilians also remained there, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said.</p> <p>“We’ll do everything that’s possible to repel the assault, but we’re calling for urgent measures to evacuate the civilians that remain inside the plant and to bring them out safely,” Sviatoslav Palamar, deputy commander of Ukraine’s Azov Regiment, said on the messaging app Telegram.</p> <p>He added that throughout the night, the plant was hit with naval artillery fire and airstrikes. Two civilian women were killed and 10 civilians wounded, he said.</p> <p>The U.N.’s Lubrani expressed hope for further evacuations but said none had been worked out.</p> <p>In his nightly video address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that by storming the steel mill, Russian forces violated agreements for safe evacuations. He said the prior evacuations are “not a victory yet, but it’s already a result. I believe there’s still a chance to save other people.”</p> <p>In other battlefield developments, Russian troops shelled a chemical plant in the eastern city of Avdiivka, killing at least 10 people, Donetsk regional governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said.</p>

“The Russians knew exactly where to aim — the workers just finished their shift and were waiting for a bus at a bus stop to take them home,” Kyrylenko wrote in a Telegram post. “Another cynical crime by Russians on our land.”

Explosions were also heard in Lviv, in western Ukraine, near the Polish border. The strikes damaged three power substations, knocking out electricity in parts of the city and disrupting the water supply, and wounded two people, the mayor said. Lviv has been a gateway for NATO-supplied weapons and a haven for those fleeing the fighting in the east.

A rocket also struck an infrastructure facility in a mountainous area in Transcarpathia, a region in far western Ukraine that borders Poland, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, authorities said. There was no immediate word of any casualties.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Russian aircraft and artillery hit hundreds of targets in the past day, including troop strongholds, command posts, artillery positions, fuel and ammunition depots and radar equipment.

Ukrainian authorities said the Russians also attacked at least a half-dozen railroad stations around the country.

The assault on the Azovstal steelworks began almost two weeks after Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his military not to storm the plant to finish off the defenders but to seal it off. The first — and so far only — civilians to be evacuated from the shattered plant got out during a brief cease-fire in an operation overseen by the U.N. and the Red Cross.

At a reception center in Zaporizhzhia, stretchers and wheelchairs were lined up, and children's shoes and toys awaited the convoy. Medical and psychological teams were on standby.

Some of the elderly evacuees appeared exhausted as they arrived. Some of the younger people, especially mothers comforting babies and other young children, appeared relieved.

“I’m very glad to be on Ukrainian soil,” said a woman who gave only her first name, Anna, and arrived with two children, ages 1 and 9. “We thought we wouldn’t get out of there, frankly speaking.”

A small group of women held up signs in English asking that fighters also be evacuated from the steel plant.

The arrival of the evacuees was a rare piece of good news in the nearly 10-week conflict that has killed thousands, forced millions to flee the country, laid waste to towns and cities, and shifted the post-Cold War balance of power in Eastern Europe.

“Over the past days, traveling with the evacuees, I have heard mothers, children and frail grandparents speak about the trauma of living day after day under unrelenting heavy shelling and the fear of death, and with extreme lack of water, food and sanitation,” Lubrani said. “They spoke of the hell they have experienced.”

In addition to the 101 people evacuated from the steelworks, 58 joined the convoy in a town on the outskirts of Mariupol, Lubrani said. About 30 people who left the plant decided to stay behind in Mariupol to try to find out whether their loved ones were alive, Lubrani said. A total of 127 evacuees arrived in Zaporizhzhia, she said.

The Russian military said earlier that some of the evacuees chose to stay in areas held by pro-Moscow separatists.

Tsybulchenko rejected Russian allegations that the Ukrainian fighters wouldn't allow civilians to leave the plant. She said the Ukrainian military told civilians that they were free to go but would be risking their lives if they did so.

"We understood clearly that under these murder weapons, we wouldn't survive, we wouldn't manage to go anywhere," she said.

Mariupol has come to symbolize the human misery inflicted by the war. The Russians' two-month siege of the strategic southern port has trapped civilians with little or no food, water, medicine or heat, as Moscow's forces pounded the city into rubble. The plant in particular has transfixed the outside world.

After failing to take Kyiv in the early weeks of the war, Russia withdrew from around the capital and announced that its chief objective was the capture of Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, known as the Donbas.

Mariupol lies in the region, and its fall would deprive Ukraine of a vital port, allow Russia to establish a land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014, and free up troops for fighting elsewhere in the Donbas.

But so far, Russia's troops and their allied separatist forces appear to have made only minor gains in the eastern offensive.

Ukraine's resistance has been significantly bolstered by Western arms, and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced 300 million pounds (\$375 million) in new military aid, including radar, drones and armored vehicles.

In a speech delivered remotely to Ukraine's parliament, he pronounced the battle Ukraine's "finest hour," echoing the words of Winston Churchill during World War II.

"Your children and grandchildren will say that Ukrainians taught the world that the brute force of an aggressor counts for nothing against the moral force of a people determined to be free," Johnson said.

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HEADLINE	05/04 NKorea fires ballistic missile; weapons test
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/north-korea-launches-projectile-apparent-weapon-test-84485757
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea -- North Korea has launched a ballistic missile toward its eastern waters on Wednesday, South Korean and Japanese officials said, days after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to bolster his nuclear arsenal "at the fastest possible pace" and threatened to use them against rivals.</p> <p>The launch, the North's 14th round of weapons firing this year, also came six days before a new conservative South Korean president takes office for a single five-year term.</p> <p>South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement that the missile was fired from the North's capital region and flew to the waters off its eastern coast. It said the South Korean military is monitoring possible additional weapons launches by North Korea.</p> <p>Japan's Defense Ministry said North Korea has fired a possible ballistic missile without providing further details. The Japanese Coast Guard urged vessels traveling off Japanese coasts to stay away from any possible fragments.</p> <p>Japan's government set up an emergency task force to deal with the missile launch, and noted that Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, currently in Rome for talks with Italian officials, instructed officials to do utmost for an emergency and to protect the safety of the people as well as vessels and aircraft around Japan.</p>

Observers say North Korea's unusually fast pace in weapons testing this year underscores its dual goal of advancing its missile programs and applying pressure on Washington over a deepening freeze in nuclear negotiations. They say Kim eventually aims to use his expanded arsenal to win an international recognition of North Korea as a nuclear state that he believes would help force the United States to relax international economic sanctions on the North.

One of the North Korean missiles tested recently was an intercontinental ballistic missile potentially capable of reaching the entirety of the American homeland. That missile's launch broke Kim's self-imposed 2018 moratorium on big weapons tests.

There are signs that the North is also preparing for a nuclear test at its remote northeastern testing facility. If made, the atomic bomb test explosion by North Korea would be the seventh of its kind and the first since 2017.

Last week, Kim Jong Un showcased his most powerful nuclear-capable missiles targeting both the United States and its allies during a massive military parade in capital, Pyongyang. During a speech at the parade, Kim said he would develop his arsenal at the "fastest possible pace" and warned that the North would preemptively use its nuclear weapons if its national interests are threatened.

North Korea has previously unleashed harsh rhetoric threatening to attack its rivals with its nuclear weapons. But the fact that Kim made the threat himself and in a detailed manner have caused security jitters among some South Koreans. Taken together with North Korea's recent tests of short-range nuclear-capable missiles, some experts speculate North Korea's possibly escalatory nuclear doctrine would allow it to launch preemptive nuclear strikes on South Korea in some cases.

Wednesday's launch came before the May 10 inauguration of South Korean President-elect Yoon Suk Yeol, who has vowed to boost Seoul's missile capability and solidify its military alliance with Washington to better cope with increasing North Korean nuclear threats.

North Korea has a history of raising animosities with weapons tests when Seoul and Washington inaugurate new governments in an apparent bid to boost its leverage in future negotiations.

Some experts say the Biden administration's passive handling of North Korea as it focuses on Russia's invasion of Ukraine and an intensifying rivalry with China is allowing more room for the North to expand its military capabilities.

The Biden administration's actions on North Korea have so far been limited to largely symbolic sanctions and offers of open-ended talks. North Korea has rejected the administration's offer for talks, saying it must first abandon its "hostile policy," in an apparent reference to U.S.-led international sanctions and U.S.-South Korean joint military exercises.

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	05/03 Chinese hackers in 'rarely seen' abuse
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/chinese-hackers-use-rarely-seen-windows-mechanism-abuse-in-campaign-undetected-for-years/
GIST	<p>Researchers have disclosed a sophisticated Winnti cyber campaign that abuses Windows mechanisms in a way 'rarely seen.'</p> <p>According to Cybereason, the Chinese advanced persistent threat (APT) group Winnti is behind the campaign, which has gone undetected for years.</p>

Active since at least 2010, [Winnti](#) is a threat group that operates using a vast array of malware and tools at its disposal. The APT, also known as APT41, BARIUM, or Blackfly, is suspected of working on behalf of the Chinese state and focuses on cyberespionage and data theft.

Past attacks connected to the group include cyberattacks against video game developers, software vendors, and universities in Hong Kong. Winnti also capitalized on the Microsoft Exchange Server [ProxyLogon flaws](#), alongside other APTs, when the critical vulnerabilities were first made public.

In two reports published [on Wednesday](#), Cybereason said the company had briefed both the FBI and US Department of Justice (DoJ) on the APT's campaign, which has been active since 2019 but only recently exposed.

According to the cybersecurity researchers, the covert attacks have been focused on infiltrating the networks of technology and manufacturing companies in Europe, Asia, and North America, focusing on stealing sensitive proprietary information.

Dubbed Operation CuckooBees, Winnti's "multi-stage infection chain" begins with exploiting vulnerabilities in enterprise resource planning (ERP) software and the deployment of the Spyder loader. The researchers say that some of the exploited bugs were known, but others were also zero-day vulnerabilities.

Once access to an enterprise system is achieved, a webshell, made up of simple code published on [websites](#) in the Chinese language, is dropped to maintain persistence.

In addition, Winnti tampers with the Windows feature WinRM over HTTP/HTTPS, and IKEEXT and PrintNotify Windows services, to create backup persistence mechanisms and to sideload Winnti DLLs.

The group then performs detailed reconnaissance on the operating system, network, and user files, before attempting to crack passwords locally using credential dumping techniques and tools.

Remote scheduled tasks are used to try and move laterally across networks.

Of particular note is Winnti's use of Stashlog, malicious software designed to abuse the Microsoft Windows Common Log File System ([CLFS](#)).

Stashlog manipulates the Transactional NTFS (TxF) and Transactional Registry (TxR) operations of CLFS. The executable stashes a payload into the CLFS log file as part of the infection chain.

"The attackers leveraged the Windows CLFS mechanism and NTFS transaction manipulations, which allowed them to conceal their payloads and evade detection by traditional security products," Cybereason says, adding that such abuse of CLFS is "rarely seen."

Following Stashlog activities, the APT will then use various tools, including Sparklog, Privatelog, and Deploylog. These malware variants extract data from the CLFS log, escalate privileges, enable further persistence, and will deploy the Winntkit rootkit driver - which acts as a kernel-mode agent to intercept TCP/IP requests.

As the investigation into Winnti's campaign is ongoing, the cybersecurity firm has only been able to share partial Indicators of Compromise (IoCs).

"Perhaps one of the most interesting things to notice is the elaborate and multi-phased infection chain Winnti employed," the researchers say. "The malware authors chose to break the infection chain into multiple interdependent phases, where each phase relies on the previous one in order to execute correctly."

	This demonstrates the thought and effort that was put into both the malware and operational security considerations, making it almost impossible to analyze unless all pieces of the puzzle are assembled in the correct order."
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HEADLINE	05/03 Google: easy to upload malicious packages
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/open-source-security-its-too-easy-to-upload-devastating-malicious-packages-warns-google/
GIST	<p>Google has detailed some of the work done to find malicious code packages that have been sneaked into bigger open-source software projects.</p> <p>The Package Analysis Project is one of the software supply chain initiatives from the the Linux Foundation's Open Source Security Foundation (OpenSSF) that should help automate the process of identifying malicious packages distributed on popular package repositories, such as npm for JavaScript and PyPI for Python. It runs a dynamic analysis of all packages uploaded to popular open-source repositories. It aims to provide data about common types of malicious packages and inform those working on open-source software supply chain security about how best to improve it.</p> <p>"Unlike mobile app stores that can scan for and reject malicious contributions, package repositories have limited resources to review the thousands of daily updates and must maintain an open model where anyone can freely contribute. As a result, malicious packages like ua-parser-js, and node-ipc are regularly uploaded to popular repositories despite their best efforts, with sometimes devastating consequences for users," Caleb Brown of Google's Open Source Security Team explains in a blogpost.</p> <p>"Despite open-source software's essential role in all software built today, it's far too easy for bad actors to circulate malicious packages that attack the systems and users running that software."</p> <p>The Package Analysis project identified more than 200 malicious packages in one month, according to OpenSSF. For example, it found token theft attacks on Discord users that were distributed on PyPI and npm. The PyPI package "discordcmd", for example, attacks the Discord Windows client via a backdoor downloaded from GitHub and installed on the Discord app to steal Discord tokens.</p> <p>Attackers distribute malicious packages on npm and PyPI often enough that it's something OpenSSF, which Google is a member of, decided it needed to be addressed.</p> <p>In March, researchers found hundreds of malicious packages on npm that were used to target developers using Microsoft's Azure cloud, most of which contained typosquatting and dependency confusion attacks. Both types are social-engineering attacks that exploit repetitive steps when developers frequently update a large number of dependencies. Dependency confusion attacks rely on unusually high version numbers for a package that in fact may have no previous version available.</p> <p>OpenSSF says most of the malicious packages it detected were dependency-confusion and typo-squatting attacks. But the project believes most of these are likely the work of security researchers participating in bug bounties.</p> <p>"The packages found usually contain a simple script that runs during install and calls home with a few details about the host. These packages are most likely the work of security researchers looking for bug bounties, since most are not exfiltrating meaningful data except the name of the machine or a username, and they make no attempt to disguise their behavior," OpenSSF and Google note.</p> <p>OpenSSF notes that any of these packages "could have done far more to hurt the unfortunate victims who installed them, so Package Analysis provides a countermeasure to these kinds of attacks."</p> <p>The recent Log4j flaw highlighted the general risks of software supply chain security in open source. The component was embedded in tens of thousands of enterprise applications and prompted a massive and</p>

[urgent clean-up by the US government](#). Microsoft last week also highlighted the role of software supply chain attacks [carried out by Russian state-backed hackers](#) in connection with military attacks on Ukraine.

This February, Google and Microsoft [pumped \\$5 million into OpenSSF's Alpha-Omega Project to tackle supply chain security](#). The Alpha side works with maintainers of the most critical open-source projects, while the Omega side will select at least 10,000 widely deployed open-source programs for automated security analysis.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Multiple govt. hacker groups target Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/google-threat-analysis-group-russia-ukraine-china-belarus-hacking/
GIST	<p>Government-backed hackers from Russia, China and Belarus have been behind a series of a series of hacking campaigns in recent weeks targeting government, industry, journalists, politicians and others, according to the latest update from Google's Threat Analysis Group.</p> <p>The Google researchers noted in an updated blog post Tuesday that in just the “past few weeks” they’ve seen at least three distinct Russian hacking groups targeting Ukraine and beyond, a Belarusian group going after “high risk individuals in Ukraine” and a Chinese hacking group running hacking campaigns against organizations in Ukraine, Russia and central Asia.</p> <p>The hacking campaigns are just the latest examples of both government and non-government hacking efforts either seeking intelligence related to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine or using the invasion as a lure in phishing campaigns.</p> <p>Ukrainian government officials and others continually publicize Russian hacking efforts targeting Ukraine alongside its ongoing kinetic military attacks. On April 27 Microsoft released a report detailing nearly 40 “destructive attacks” as part of Russian operations against Ukraine, which have included intelligence gathering efforts as well as operations aimed at destroying infrastructure, including portions of the Ukrainian electrical grid.</p> <p>Tuesday’s update from Google offered a bit more detail on three recent and distinct Russian campaigns. The Russian military intelligence-affiliated Fancy Bear — also known as APT28 — has been targeting Ukrainians with a new variant of malware, distributed via email attachments inside of password-protected zip files, designed to steal cookies and saved passwords from Chrome, Edge and Firefox browsers.</p> <p>Turla, a separate and well-established Russian government group that Google ties to Russia’s Federal Security Service, has been targeting defense and cybersecurity organizations in the Baltics, the researchers said. Each target received a unique link that led to a malicious .docx file that would attempt to download a unique image file, but it’s not clear what the aim was.</p> <p>And a third Russian hacking group Google refers to as Cold River — known elsewhere as Callisto — continues to use Gmail accounts to send credential phishing emails to Google and non-Google accounts, the researchers wrote Tuesday. Targets include government and defense officials, politicians, non-governmental organizations and journalists.</p> <p>On March 30 Google researchers pointed to Cold River activity that, for the first time, was observed targeting the militaries of multiple Eastern European countries and a NATO Centre of Excellence. Tuesday’s update notes that the campaign’s tactics, techniques and procedures have shifted slightly from phishing links directly in the emails to also linking to Google Drive and Microsoft One Drive hosted PDFs or documents.</p> <p>Ghostwriter, a Belarusian government hacking effort, continues to target “high risk individuals” in Ukraine in a credential-theft campaign using compromised websites, the researchers said, although no accounts were compromised in the latest effort.</p>

	And Curious George, a Chinese-government hacking group Google ties to People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force , continues targeting government, military, logistics and manufacturing organizations in Ukraine, Russia and Central Asia. The group's "long running campaigns" against Russian targets continue, including against the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In just the last week, Google researchers identified unspecified "additional compromises" impacting multiple Russian defense contractors, manufacturers and an unnamed Russian logistics company.
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HEADLINE	05/04 Hackers lure: Ukraine war-themed files
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/05/ukraine-war-themed-files-become-lure-of.html
GIST	<p>A growing number of threat actors are using the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war as a lure in various phishing and malware campaigns, even as critical infrastructure entities continue to be heavily targeted.</p> <p>"Government-backed actors from China, Iran, North Korea and Russia, as well as various unattributed groups, have used various Ukraine war-related themes in an effort to get targets to open malicious emails or click malicious links," Google Threat Analysis Group's (TAG) Billy Leonard said in a report.</p> <p>"Financially motivated and criminal actors are also using current events as a means for targeting users," Leonard added.</p> <p>One notable threat actor is Curious Gorge, which TAG has attributed to China People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force (PLA SSF) and has been observed striking government, military, logistics and manufacturing organizations in Ukraine, Russia and Central Asia.</p> <p>Attacks aimed at Russia have singled out several governmental entities, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with additional compromises impacting Russian defense contractors and manufacturers as well as an unnamed logistics company.</p> <p>The findings follow disclosures that a China-linked government-sponsored threat actor known as Mustang Panda (aka Bronze President) may have been targeting Russian government officials with an updated version of a remote access trojan called PlugX.</p> <p>Another set of phishing attacks involved APT28 (aka Fancy Bear) hackers targeting Ukrainian users with a .NET malware that's capable of stealing cookies and passwords from Chrome, Edge and Firefox browsers.</p> <p>Also implicated were Russia-based threat groups, including Turla (aka Venomous Bear) and COLDRIIVER (aka Calisto), as well as a Belarusian hacking crew named Ghostwriter in different credential phishing campaigns targeting defense and cybersecurity organizations in the Baltic region and high-risk individuals in Ukraine.</p> <p>Ghostwriter's latest attacks directed victims to compromised websites, from where the users were sent to an attacker-controlled web page to harvest their credentials.</p> <p>In an unrelated phishing campaign targeting entities in Eastern European countries, a previously unknown and financially motivated hacking group has been spotted impersonating a Russian agency to deploy a JavaScript backdoor called DarkWatchman onto infected computers.</p> <p>IBM Security X-Force connected the intrusions to a threat cluster it's tracking under the moniker Hive0117.</p> <p>"The campaign masquerades as official communications from the Russian Government's Federal Bailiffs Service, the Russian-language emails are addressed to users in Lithuania, Estonia, and Russia in the Telecommunications, Electronic and Industrial sectors," the company said.</p>

Return to Top	<p>The findings come as Microsoft divulged that six different Russia-aligned actors launched at least 237 cyberattacks against Ukraine from February 23 to April 8, including 38 discrete destructive attacks that irrevocably destroyed files in hundreds of systems across dozens of organizations in the country.</p> <p>The geopolitical tensions and the ensuing military invasion of Ukraine have also fueled an escalation in data wiper attacks intended to cripple mission critical processes and destroy forensic evidence.</p> <p>What's more, the Computer Emergency Response Team of Ukraine (CERT-UA) revealed details of ongoing distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks directed against government and news portals by injecting malicious JavaScript (dubbed "BrownFlood") into the compromised sites.</p> <p>DDoS attacks have been reported beyond Ukraine as well. Last week, Romania's National Directorate of Cyber Security (DNSC) disclosed that several websites belonging to public and private institutions were "targeted by attackers who aimed to make these online services unavailable."</p> <p>The attacks, claimed by a pro-Russian collective called Killnet, come in response to Romania's decision to support Ukraine in the military conflict with Russia.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Hive, Conti ransomware negotiation tactics
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/ransomware/conti-ransomware-groups-used-car-salesmen-negotiations-discounts-and-limited-time-offers
GIST	<p>An analysis of 40 negotiations from Hive and Conti showed stark differences between the two ransomware group's negotiating tactics. Hive was more freewheeling and less businesslike. Conti offered limited-time offers and holiday discounts.</p> <p>"It is advantageous for defenders or anyone that's going to have to deal with these negotiators to kind of get an idea of what type of tactics do they use, what type of [business] language they use, how hardened are they around deadlines and things like that," said Nick Biasini, threat researcher and head of outreach for Cisco Talos, which conducted the research.</p> <p>Both Hive and Conti negotiate prices based on apparent research into victims. Hive generally set its opening bid at 1% of annual revenue, though sometimes ranged as high as 1.5% of annual revenue. From there, the group would could be negotiated down. The group would offer reductions between 5% and 25%, though occasionally between 30% and 66%. Conti, too, did advance research, offered a price, and was quick to lower it in negotiations.</p> <p>What set Hive apart was its hardball style of negotiation. Messages were short and no-nonsense, and the group was quick to make escalators threats, including increasing ransom demands or threatening to leak data to a securities regulatory commission for what they saw as delayed communication. In one case, they increased a \$2 million ransom to \$10 million after a victim did not communicate for a week. In more successful negotiations, Hive offered third-party negotiators kickbacks for paid ransom.</p> <p>Conti, on the other hand, negotiated with scripted empathy — what Biasini likened to used-car salesman tactics. They offered holiday discounts and limited-time offers, security reports to help victims prevent further intrusion, and told victims to search for prior victim's online accounts of their good customer service and follow-through with promises even after the ransom was paid.</p> <p>"Even though that report probably isn't going to contain anything that's hugely valuable, they want to think, they'll at least help you try to understand what we did," Biasini said.</p> <p>The security report obtained by Cisco Talos was generic, and appeared to be written to be reusable for multiple victims.</p>

	<p>The freewheeling, unscripted communication style of Hive created operational security problems for the group. Negotiators revealed information about the encryption process and the pricing scheme that the group would likely rather keep secret. Hive encryption, its negotiator said, was not AES but a Vernam's cypher.</p> <p>In all, Biasini said he hoped there would be more systemic research into negotiating styles rather to complement the computer science that tends to take center stage.</p> <p>"There's a lot of attention paid to the technical side of things with ransomware operators, like how they compromised systems, what the affiliates do when they're in infrastructures, how the actual ransomware operates on the systems themselves and in environments. We wanted to pay some attention to who are the actual people that you're negotiating with on the back end," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/04 Winnti threat groups infection chain IP theft
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/cybercrime/winnti-threat-groups-full-infection-chain-for-ip-theft-comes-into-focus
GIST	<p>Cybereason published detailed research into the Winnti group, including what it believes is the first full view of an infection chain utilizing previously unknown malware, used in espionage campaigns.</p> <p>"Mandiant and ESET both published either reports or tweets (in the case of ESET) about some of these components, but they didn't see the full picture. We're the first, to best of my knowledge, to really see the entire attack," said Assaf Dahan, senior director and head of threat research at Cybereason.</p> <p>The company briefed the Federal Bureau of Investigation on its findings earlier this month.</p> <p>Winnti is a long-running hacking operation engaged in criminal and nation-state activities. As an espionage group, Winnti has long been connected to China, including when seven members of the group were indicted in 2020.</p> <p>The Cybereason research comes from several investigations of Winnti trying to steal intellectual property from technology and manufacturing firms in East Asia, Western Europe, and North America. The campaign, which Cybereason has dubbed "Operation Cuckoo Bees," dates back at least to 2019.</p> <p>Cybereason became aware of the campaign in 2021 investigating a breach at an Asian firm with annual revenue of \$5 billion. They found 30 other attacks in total, and estimate the value of potential stolen intellectual property in the trillions of dollars.</p> <p>Winnti entered networks using vulnerabilities in ERP. The group would then search for a .DLL used in previous attacks, followed by installing boatloads of web shells ("We found 20 plus on servers," said Dahan).</p> <p>Through a multi-stage infection chain, Winnti installed an updated version of its Winnkit root kit, which Cybereason profiled for the first time in its report. A previous version of Winnkit was profiled in 2019. The new one, in use since at least 2019, has been extremely stealthy.</p> <p>"It's a type of rootkit really designed for stealth. There's one hash that we give them, as an example, we have submitted VirusTotal from almost a year ago up until this very day. I think only one vendor labeled it as malicious — one out of 68," he said.</p> <p>The infection chain requires multiple components to deploy successfully. At the beginning of the attack, Winnti installs the backdoor Spyder. The installer Stashlog (recently detailed by Mandiant) establishes Windows CLFS for use in storing and unloading payloads. Sparklog (recently detailed by ESET) extracts PrivateLog (also detailed by Mandiant) through CLFS, and is then used to execute it. PrivateLog launches DeployLog, which installs Winnkit and later communicates with the command and control servers.</p>

	<p>"All those steps are interdependent. In order for Winnkit to be installed, they have to run in a specific order. We call it a house of cards," said Dahan.</p> <p>Windows CLFS (common log file system) is what Dahan describes as a not particularly well-documented feature of Windows. Routing attacks through it is rare, he said.</p> <p>The exfiltration tactic used by the group involves compressing files, giving Cybereason a sense of what was being stolen and reason to believe this was an espionage campaign rather than a criminal one.</p> <p>Winnti is a broad label for a threat actor that seems to have many smaller components — Cybereason tracks at least 10 different clusters of activity, and "every researcher will define them differently," said Dahan. There may be other infection chains dependent on the group.</p> <p>Indicators of compromise and other detection information is available in Cybereason's report.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Europol: deepfakes growing threat
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/deepfakes-are-growing-threat-cybersecurity-and-society-europol
GIST	<p>Deepfakes, left unchecked, are set to become the cybercriminals' next big weapon</p> <p>Deepfake technology uses artificial intelligence techniques to alter existing or create new audio or audio-visual content. It has some non-malign purposes — such as satire and gaming — but is increasingly used by bad actors for bad purposes. And yet, in 2019, research from iProove showed that 72% of people were still unaware of deepfakes.</p> <p>Deepfakes are used to create a false narrative apparently originating from trusted sources. The two primary threats are against civil society (spreading disinformation to manipulate opinion towards a desired effect, such as a particular election outcome); and against individuals or companies to obtain a financial return. The threat to civil society is that, left unchecked, entire populations could have their views and opinions swayed by deepfake-delivered disinformation campaigns distorting the truth of events. People will no longer be able to determine truth from falsehood.</p> <p>The cybersecurity threat to companies is that deepfakes could increase the effectiveness of phishing and BEC attacks, make identity fraud easier, and manipulate company reputations to cause an unjustified collapse in share value.</p> <p>Deepfake technology</p> <p>A deepfake is developed by using a neural network to examine and discover the patterns necessary to produce a convincing picture, and to develop a machine learning algorithm from this. As with all machine learning, the quantity of data that can be used for training is critical – the larger the dataset, the more accurate the algorithm. Large training datasets are already freely available on the internet.</p> <p>Two current developments have improved and increased the quality and threat from deepfakes. The first is the adaptation and use of generative adversarial networks (GANs). A GAN operates with two models: generative and discriminating. The discriminating model repeatedly tests the generative model against the original dataset. "With the results from these tests," writes Europol (<i>Law enforcement and the challenge of deepfakes</i> – PDF), "the models continuously improve until the generated content is just as likely to come from the generative model as the training data." The result is a false image that cannot be detected by the human eye but is under the control of an attacker.</p> <p>The second threat comes from 5G bandwidth and the compute power of the cloud, allowing video streams to be manipulated in real time. "Deepfake technologies can therefore be applied in videoconferencing settings, live-streaming video services and television," writes Europol.</p>

Cybersecurity threats

Few criminals have the necessary expertise to develop and use compelling deepfakes – but this is unlikely to delay their use. The continuing evolution and development of [crime-as-a-service \(CaaS\)](#) “is expected to evolve in parallel with current technologies, resulting in the automation of crimes such as hacking and adversarial machine learning and deepfakes,” says Europol.

Deepfake threats fall into four main categories: societal (stoking social unrest and political polarization); legal (falsifying electronic evidence); personal (harassment and bullying, non-consensual pornography and online child exploitation); and traditional cybersecurity (extortion and fraud and manipulating financial markets).

Forged passports with a deepfake photograph will be difficult to detect. These could then be used to facilitate multiple other crimes, from identity theft and trafficking to illegal immigration and terrorist travel.

Deepfakes of embarrassing or illegal activity could be used for extortion. Phishing could move to a new level if the lure includes video or voice of a trusted friend. BEC attacks could be supported by a video message and voice identical to the genuine CEO. But the really serious threat could come from market manipulation.

VMware’s Tom Kellermann recently [told SecurityWeek that market manipulation](#) already exceeds the value of ransomware to the criminals. This is currently achieved through the use of stolen information that allows the criminal to benefit from what is essentially insider trading. However, the use of deepfakes could give the criminals a more direct approach. False information, embarrassing revelations, accusations of illegal exports and much more could cause a dramatic collapse in the share value of a company. Criminal gangs with deep pockets, or even rogue nation states seeking to offset sanctions, could buy the shares when low, and make a massive ‘killing’ when the value inevitably rises again.

Security is based on trust. Deepfakes provide trust where none should exist.

Detection of deepfakes

The quality of deepfakes already exceeds the ability of the human eye to detect a forgery. A limited solution uses the principle of provenance on original source material – but this will benefit law enforcement’s need to keep deepfakes out of criminal evidence proceedings more than it will prevent deepfake cybercrime.

Technology is another potential method. Examples include biological signals based on imperfections in the natural changes of skin tone caused by blood flow; phoneme-viseme mismatches (that is, an imperfect correlation between word and mouth correspondence); facial movements (where facial and head movements don’t correctly correlate); and recurrent convolutional models which look for inconsistencies between the individual frames that comprise a video.

But there are difficulties. Just like a slight variation to malware may be enough to fool malware signature detection engines, so a slight alteration to the method used to generate a deepfake might also fool existing detection. This could be simply updating the discriminative model within the GAN used to produce the deepfake.

A further problem could be caused by compressing the deepfake video, which would reduce the number of pixels available to the detection algorithm.

Europol recommends that avoiding deepfakes may be more effective than trying to detect them. The first recommendation is to rely on audio-visual authorization rather than just audio. This may be a short-term solution until the deepfake technology, cloud compute power and 5G bandwidth make it ineffective. These developments will also negate the second recommendation: to demand live video connection.

The final recommendation is a form of captcha; that is, says Europol, “Requiring random complicated acts to be performed live in front of the camera, e.g. move hands across the face.”

The way forward

The simple reality is that deepfake production technology is currently improving faster than deepfake detection technology. The threat is to both society and corporations.

For society, Europol warns, “Experts fear this may lead to a situation where citizens no longer have a shared reality, or could create societal confusion about which information sources are reliable; a situation sometimes referred to as ‘information apocalypse’ or ‘reality apathy’.”

Corporations are in a slightly stronger position since they can include context in any decision on whether to accept or reject an audio/visual approach. They could also insist on machine-to-machine communications rather than person-to-person, using zero-trust principles to verify the machine owner rather than the communication.

Where it becomes particularly difficult, however, is when deepfakes are used against society (or at least the stock-holding part of society) to manipulate a crash in share value for the corporation. “This process,” warns Europol, “is further complicated by the human predisposition to believe audio-visual content and work from a truth default perspective.” The public is not likely to immediately believe the corporation’s insistence that it is all just fake news – at least not in time to prevent the share crash.

Deepfakes are already a problem, but likely to become an even greater problem over the next couple of years.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Corporate transactions personnel targeted
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/cyberespionage-group-targeting-ma-corporate-transactions-personnel
GIST	<p>Security researchers at Mandiant are documenting the discovery of a new hacking group focused on cyberespionage targeting employees responsible for corporate development, large corporate transactions, and mergers and acquisitions.</p> <p>Referred to as UNC3524 – Mandiant uses 'UNC' to track uncategorized hacking groups – the threat actor does not appear interested in immediate financial gain, given that it manages to remain undetected for an order of magnitude longer than the average dwell time of 21 days in 2021.</p> <p>Mandiant said the group managed to stay under the radar partly through the use of backdoors installed on appliances that do not support security tools, but also displays a high level of operational security and evasive skills.</p> <p>The group has a small malware footprint, has built a large Internet of Things (IoT) botnet, and shows a focus on maintaining persistent access to the target environments by employing various mechanisms to immediately re-compromise a network after being booted, Mandiant said in a report.</p> <p>After gaining initial access to a network, the group was observed installing a novel backdoor called QUIETXIT that was built on open-source Dropbear SSH client-server software – on appliances running older BSD or CentOS iterations. This has allowed the malicious file to remain undetected for more than 18 months.</p> <p>"For their long-haul remote access, UNC3524 opted to deploy QUIETEXIT on opaque network appliances within the victim environment; think backdoors on SAN arrays, load balancers, and wireless access point controllers. These kinds of devices don't support antivirus or endpoint detection and response tools (EDRs), subsequently leaving the underlying operating systems to vendors to manage," Mandiant added.</p>

The researchers found that QUIETEXIT was designed in such a manner that it reverses the traditional client-server roles in an SSH connection: the client running on the infected system establishes a TCP connection and then performs the SSH server role.

“The QUIETEXIT component running on the threat actor’s infrastructure initiates the SSH connection and sends a password. Once the backdoor establishes a connection, the threat actor can use any of the options available to an SSH client, including proxying traffic via SOCKS,” Mandiant said.

While QUIETEXIT has no persistence mechanism, UNC3524 would install a run command or hijack legitimate startup scripts to ensure the backdoor runs at system startup.

According to Mandiant, the observed QUIETEXIT command and control (C&C) servers use dynamic DNS providers, which allows the adversary to update the DNS records almost seamlessly.

In some instances, the threat actor deployed a secondary backdoor called REGEORG, a web shell designed to create a SOCKS proxy. Mandiant said the web shell was deployed on servers that had internet access in a manner that it would blend with legitimate applications (using specific names and even employing timestomping to match its timestamp with that of other files).

“UNC3452 only used these web shells when their QUIETEXIT backdoors stopped functioning and only to re-establish QUIETEXIT on another system in the network. UNC3452 used a still public but little-known version of the web shell that is heavily obfuscated. This allowed them to bypass common signature-based detections for REGEORG,” according to the Mandiant report.

To keep the malware footprint low, the attackers relied on built-in Windows protocols. Lateral movement was obtained through a customized version of Impacket’s WMIEXEC tool, which employs Windows Management Instrumentation to create a semi-interactive shell.

UNC3524 was observed employing privileged credentials to access the victim’s mail environment and target the mailboxes of executive teams and personnel in departments such as corporate development, IT security, or mergers and acquisitions.

The threat actor then moved to extract specific emails from the victim mailboxes, after getting a better understanding of those mailboxes – specifically, items created after the threat actor last accessed the mailbox were targeted for exfiltration.

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HEADLINE	05/04 State-backed Chinese hackers target Russia
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/chinese-hackers-target-russia/
GIST	<p>Financially motivated and state-sponsored actors around the globe continue to use the war in Ukraine as a lure for phishing campaigns, with Chinese groups targeting Russia of late, according to Google.</p> <p>The tech giant’s Threat Analysis Group (TAG) claimed in its new quarterly bulletin that the usual governments of China, Iran, North Korea and Russia were responsible for many of the attacks recorded over the period.</p> <p>Interestingly, Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) actors continue to target Russian assets, despite Beijing’s tacit approval of the invasion of Ukraine and an increasingly close geopolitical relationship between the two autocracies.</p> <p>The PLA attacks targeted government, military, logistics and manufacturing organizations in Ukraine, Russia and Central Asia, according to TAG.</p> <p>“In Russia, long-running campaigns against multiple government organizations have continued, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” it added. “Over the past week, TAG identified additional compromises impacting multiple Russian defense contractors and manufacturers and a Russian logistics company.”</p>

	<p>Elsewhere, TAG observed the infamous Russian APT28/Fancy Bear group targeting users in Ukraine with new password-stealing malware delivered via booby-trapped email attachments.</p> <p>It also claimed to have detected the Turla group, thought to be part of Russia's FSB, continue running phishing campaigns against targets in the Baltics.</p> <p>A third Russian state actor, Coldriver/Callisto, continued to use Gmail accounts to send phishing emails to government and defense officials, politicians, NGOs and think tanks and journalists, TAG added.</p> <p>Elsewhere, it noted that the Belarusian Ghostwriter group resumed targeting Gmail accounts via credential phishing, particularly "high-risk" individuals in Ukraine.</p> <p>Last week, Microsoft released new threat intelligence claiming that Russian state-aligned actors had launched 237 campaigns against Ukrainian targets since just before the invasion and that more were likely on their way.</p> <p>Pre-positioning for such attacks began as far back as March 2021, it noted.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/04 Healthcare, education sectors vulnerable
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/healthcare-education-cyber/
GIST	<p>Healthcare and education are the sectors most vulnerable to cyber-attacks. This is according to H2 2021 data from the UK's Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), analyzed by CybSafe. This followed an earlier examination of H1 2021 ICO data by the cybersecurity firm.</p> <p>In total, healthcare and education made up more than a third (34%) of security incidents last year, a 1% rise compared to 2020. The data revealed a significant increase in ransomware attacks targeting the education sector, rising from 19% in 2020 to 22% in 2021. This was particularly profound in the first half of 2021 (26%).</p> <p>Despite this, the retail and manufacturing sector faced twice as many attacks as either of these industries, experiencing 20% of all attacks in H2 2021. Interestingly, the analysis revealed that ransomware attacks targeting retail and manufacturing superseded phishing for the first time last year. Ransomware made up 27% of all attacks, up from 23% in 2020, with phishing attacks falling from 31% to 26%.</p> <p>Overall, the ICO data found that phishing continues to be the most common attack vector, at just under 30%, although ransomware is a growing threat to all industries.</p> <p>Oz Alashe, CEO of CybSafe, said: "The ICO data tells a clear story. The pandemic saw a steep rise in ransomware attacks. With important sectors such as education and healthcare seeing a sustained level of cyber-threats throughout the last year, we need to go beyond standard security training practices.</p> <p>"To embody a security-first culture, the human aspect of cybersecurity shouldn't be underestimated. If we want to invoke genuine behavior change, the first step is to appreciate individuals responding differently to threats, and personalization is crucial to building an authentic security-first culture.</p> <p>"Appreciating differences in teams means you can deliver tailored security initiatives. The result is greater employee confidence, changes in security behavior and ultimately a defense against such malicious threats that will only grow in importance over the coming years."</p> <p>The figures tie in with other research about rising ransomware attacks last year. A recent survey by Obrela found that 81% of UK healthcare organizations suffered a ransomware attack in 2021, while the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) issued a warning about surging ransomware attacks targeting the education sector.</p>

HEADLINE	05/03 New ransomware links to NKorea govt.
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-ransomware-strains-linked-to-north-korean-govt-hackers/
GIST	<p>Several ransomware strains have been linked to APT38, a North Korean-sponsored hacking group known for its focus on targeting and stealing funds from financial institutions worldwide.</p> <p>They're also known for deploying destructive malware on their victims' networks during the last stage of their attacks, likely to destroy any traces of their activity.</p> <p>Christiaan Beek, a lead threat researcher at cybersecurity firm Trellix, said that the group's operators (part of Unit 180 of North Korea's cyber-army Bureau 121) have also used the Beaf, PXJ, ZZZZ, and ChiChi ransomware families to extort some of their victims.</p> <p>The links to APT38 were found while analyzing code and artifact similarity with VHD ransomware which, just like TFlower ransomware, was linked to the North Korean Lazarus APT group.</p> <p>Kaspersky and Sygnia researchers made the connection after seeing the two strains being deployed on victims' networks via the cross-platform MATA malware framework, a malicious tool exclusively used by Lazarus operators, according to Kaspersky.</p> <p>Beek revealed on Wednesday that — based on visualizing the code using Hilbert curve mapping — PXJ, Beaf, and ZZZZ share a notable amount of source code and functionality with VHD and TFlower ransomware, with Beaf and ZZZZ being almost exact clones of each other.</p> <p>"You don't have to be a malware specialist to immediately recognize that the ZZZ and BEAF Ransomware pictures are almost identical," the Trellix researcher said.</p> <p>"It also becomes apparent that both Tflower and ChiChi are vastly different when compared to VHD."</p> <p>While ChiChi's codebase has little to no common points, Beek was able to find that the Semenov[.]akkim@protonmail[.]com email address was used by both ChiChi and ZZZZ in their ransom notes.</p> <p>Attacks using these ransomware families have only targeted entities in the Asia-Pacific (APAC), making it harder to find the victims' identities since there were no negotiation chats or leak sites to investigate.</p> <p>Trellix also attempted to discover additional links by analyzing the cryptocurrency transfers behind ransom payments but found no overlap in the crypto wallets used to collect ransoms.</p> <p>However, they discovered that the North Korean hackers were only able to collect small amounts of crypto assets (for instance, a 2.2 BTC transfer in mid-2020, worth \$20,000 at the time).</p> <p>"We suspect the ransomware families [...] are part of more organized attacks," Beek added.</p> <p>"Based on our research, combined intelligence, and observations of the smaller targeted ransomware attacks, Trellix attributes them to DPRK affiliated hackers with high confidence."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/04 Mitsubishi Electric admits fake control tests
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/technology/mitsubishi-electric-faked-safety-and-quality-control-tests-for-decades/

Mitsubishi Electric, one of the world's leading manufacturers of large-scale electrical and HVAC systems has admitted to fraudulently conducting quality assurance tests on its transformers—for decades.

Thousands of such improperly tested transformers were then shipped both within Japan and overseas.

And it turns out, this isn't the first time Mitsubishi has been caught cheating either.

Mitsubishi Electric admits to falsifying safety test data

Tokyo-based electronics giant, Mitsubishi Electric has revealed flaws in its quality assurance (QA) testing procedures, including falsifying numbers in the test reports for transformers.

With its \$34 billion revenue and 138,000 employees worldwide, Mitsubishi Electric is a leader in producing automotive equipment, air conditioning systems, heavy-duty transformers, and semiconductors.

In a [series of statements](#) released this April, the company announced the results of an investigation led by an external committee brought on board in July 2021 to dive deeper into quality control malpractices at Mitsubishi Electric.

"Several inspections of transformers rated 22KV 2MVA or above manufactured at Mitsubishi Electric's Transmission & Distribution Systems Center in Ako, Hyogo Prefecture, did not fully comply with customer-requested testing standards that required compliance with the Japan Electrotechnical Committee (JEC), International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), or Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) standards," reveal the committee's findings.

In some cases, the committee confirmed, improper statements had been entered in inspection reports. Additionally, several unit designs deviated from what had been proposed within internal design guidelines or agreed upon with customers.

For example, in "Temperature Rise Tests," the 22kV 2MVA transformer units very well exceeded the maximum temperature specified by the regulatory bodies, but Mitsubishi Electric's test reports fraudulently portrayed that the units posed no overheating risk.

Similarly, [dielectric tests](#)—that measure an equipment's ability to withstand high voltages (e.g. during [surge events and spikes](#)), were conducted at voltages lower than what is required by various industry standards.

A total of 8,363 Mitsubishi Electric transformers rated 22kV 2MVA or above have been shipped to customers between 1982 and March 2022. Of these, 3,384—a little over 40%, had been inadequately tested.

Out of these improperly tested units, 1,589 were delivered within Japan and 1,795 overseas.

Once a cheater, always a cheater?

It turns out not much has changed at the Mitsubishi group of companies, which have had a history of dishonest quality control practices.

In October 2021, former chairman Masaki Sakuyama [resigned](#) from Mitsubishi Electric following the release of an [initial report](#) on the quality control scandal.

Prior to that, in July, the company's then-President and CEO Takeshi Sugiyama also quit over "[three decades of systematic deceit](#)," a period during which the electronics manufacturer faked inspection reports for air conditioners and brake compressors installed on trains.

In 2016, Mitsubishi Motors—a sister company to Mitsubishi Electric, came under fire for [inaccurate fuel-economy test reports](#) leading to resignations.

	<p>In 2000, Mitsubishi admitted to a 30-year cover-up of auto defects and said it would recall a million cars. Although originally set to conclude this April, the present investigation into all of Mitsubishi Electric's 22 facilities producing transformers is still ongoing with no date set for completion.</p> <p>An updated report from the committee investigators is expected to follow this month. The company has outlined a set of "robust policies" to prevent such mishaps from recurring.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Unpatched DNS bug in routers, IoT devices
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/unpatched-dns-bug-affects-millions-of-routers-and-iot-devices/
GIST	<p>A vulnerability in the domain name system (DNS) component of a popular C standard library that is present in a wide range of IoT products may put millions of devices at DNS poisoning attack risk.</p> <p>A threat actor can use DNS poisoning or DNS spoofing to redirect the victim to a malicious website hosted at an IP address on a server controlled by the attacker instead of the legitimate location.</p> <p>The library uClibc and its fork from the OpenWRT team, uClibc-ng. Both variants are widely used by major vendors like Netgear, Axis, and Linksys, as well as Linux distributions suitable for embedded applications.</p> <p>According to researchers at Nozomi Networks, a fix is not currently available from the developer of uClibc, leaving products of up to 200 vendors at risk.</p> <p>Vulnerability details</p> <p>The uClibc library is a C standard library for embedded systems that offers various resources needed by functions and configuration modes on these devices.</p> <p>The DNS implementation in that library provides a mechanism for performing DNS-related requests like lookups, translating domain names to IP addresses, etc.</p> <p>Nozomi reviewed the trace of DNS requests performed by a connected device using the uClibc library and found some peculiarities caused by an internal lookup function.</p> <p>After investigating further, the analysts discovered that the DNS lookup request's transaction ID was predictable. Because of this, DNS poisoning might be possible under certain circumstances.</p> <p>Flaw implications</p> <p>If the operating system doesn't use source port randomization, or if it does but the attacker is still capable of brute-forcing the 16-bit source port value, a specially-crafted DNS response sent to devices using uClibc could trigger a DNS poisoning attack.</p> <p>DNS poisoning is practically tricking the target device into pointing to an arbitrarily defined endpoint and engaging in network communications with it.</p> <p>By doing that, the attacker would be able to reroute the traffic to a server under their direct control.</p> <p>"The attacker could then steal or manipulate information transmitted by users and perform other attacks against those devices to completely compromise them. The main issue here is how DNS poisoning attacks can force an authenticated response," - Nozomi Networks</p> <p>Mitigation and fixing</p> <p>Nozomi discovered the flaw in September 2021 and informed CISA about it. Then, in December, it reported to the CERT Coordination Center, and finally, in January 2022, it disclosed the vulnerability to over 200 potentially impacted vendors.</p>

	<p>As mentioned above, there's currently no fix available for the flaw, which is now tracked under ICS-VU-638779 and VU#473698 (no CVE yet).</p> <p>Currently, all stakeholders are coordinating to develop a viable patch and the community is expected to play a pivotal role in this, as this was precisely the purpose of the disclosure.</p> <p>As the affected vendors will have to apply the patch by implementing the new uClibc version on firmware updates, it will take a while for the fixes to reach end consumers.</p> <p>Even then, end-users will have to apply the firmware updates on their devices, which is another choke point that causes delays in fixing critical security flaws.</p> <p>"Because this vulnerability remains unpatched, for the safety of the community, we cannot disclose the specific devices we tested on," says Nozomi</p> <p>"We can, however, disclose that they were a range of well-known IoT devices running the latest firmware versions with a high chance of them being deployed throughout all critical infrastructure."</p> <p>Users of IoT and router devices should keep an eye on new firmware releases from vendors and apply the latest updates as soon as they become available.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 SolarWinds attackers typosquatting
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/solarwinds-attackers-gearing-up-typosquatting-attacks
GIST	<p>A typosquatting campaign intended to abuse popular brands is in the works, likely tied to Nobelium, the notorious Russian-state-backed group behind the SolarWinds attacks.</p> <p>Recorded Future in its latest research is warning that the attackers are using infrastructure similar to that known to be used by Nobelium, to set up their command-and-control (C2) servers.</p> <p>This time, the group is preying on users looking online for specific brands who enter common spelling errors or "typos" in the URL. Those misspelled domain names are purchased by threat actors, who stand up spoofed sites to trick people into giving up their credentials, credit-card details, and more.</p> <p>"A key factor we have observed from Nobelium operators involved in threat activity is a reliance on domains that emulate other brands (some legitimate and some that are likely fictitious businesses)," the Recorded Future team explained in their report. "Domain registrations and typosquats can enable spearphishing campaigns or redirects that pose a threat to victim networks and brands."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Data breach at energy supplier
SOURCE	https://portswigger.net/daily-swig/data-breach-at-us-energy-supplier-riviera-utilities-exposes-customer-information?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>A data breach at Riviera Utilities, a utility company serving Baldwin County in Alabama, has exposed the personal details of customers after employee email accounts were accessed.</p> <p>In a statement released last night (May 2), the company confirmed that an unknown actor had gained access to internal data.</p> <p>Exposed details include the personal information of a "limited number of individuals", such as names, Social Security numbers, driver's license or state identification numbers, passport numbers, medical information, health insurance information, credit or debit card numbers, card expiration dates, and card CVVs.</p>

	<p>The elements of personal information varied for different customers, Riviera Utilities added.</p> <p>A forensic investigation carried out on March 28, 2022, determined that the email accounts were accessed on or about October 17, 2021. Those affected in the breach were notified on April 26.</p> <p>Riviera Utilities said in a statement: “This access did not include the systems storing auto-pay, bank draft data, or other personal information. Additionally, any personal information entered and submitted through Riviera’s website was unaffected by this security incident.</p> <p>“We have no evidence that any personal information was misused as a result of this incident. However, out of an abundance of caution, we notified individuals whose information may have been included in the files present in the impacted employee email accounts.”</p> <p>Those affected by the breach are being offered free credit monitoring services.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Craft fair vendors targeted by scammers
SOURCE	https://blog.malwarebytes.com/scams/2022/05/craft-fair-vendors-targeted-by-fake-event-scammers-on-facebook/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>A real world scam which sucks the fun out of craft fairs has caused nothing but stress for victims. It may sound bizarre, but it’s actually a fairly popular attack focused on small/self-run business owners selling their own creations.</p> <p>Are you ready for a trip to the craft fair?</p> <p>You’re a small business owner. You sell a variety of craft-style items, the type you see in vast quantities on sites like Etsy and Redbubble. Getting these products in front of real world audiences at an event is sure to boost sales.</p> <p>You see messages posted to genuine crafting community groups, looking for sellers to grab a stall spot at an upcoming fair. You’re given a link to a booking form for more information, and asked for payment via PayPal or similar methods. Soon after paying, the organiser vanishes and you realise you’re £60 to £75 out of pocket for a three day event. More, if you took the time to arrange transport and head down to the non-existent fair.</p> <p>This isn’t an isolated case; this specific scam targeted people all across the UK.</p> <p>How does this fake vendor fair scam work?</p> <p>The general flow follows a similar pattern, no matter the location.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The fake organisers create brand new Facebook accounts, and often reuse the same name across multiple profiles. 2. They use several online forms to collect information from the would-be fair exhibitors. We’ve provided an example of what one of the forms used looked like below. It asks for name, address, a description of sold items, business name, and phone number. 3. At this point, requests for payment are made. Depending on the payment method, it may range from “reasonably easy” to “complete nightmare” to recover the funds. <p>How do they select targets?</p> <p>The fraudsters use the seller’s own public information against them, taking note of location or even types of product sold before claiming an event is taking place nearby.</p>

The really interesting thing about all this is that fake fair scams aren't some weird anomaly. It's an actual mini-industry populated by particularly dedicated scammers.

A brief history of fake fair scamming

While this may be the first fake fair scam you've read about in the news, it's by no means the first to take place. They're quite popular in the US, but can pop up pretty much anywhere. Below is just a few examples of how this ruse operates.

Targeting the visitors

October 2021 to February 2022: Spokane County discovered a [fake event](#) claiming to be the Spokane County Interstate Fair. A fake Facebook account messaged people asking them to pay for tickets via a registration link. They weren't trying elaborate tactics on sellers here; they just wanted visitor money as fast as they could get it before being shut down.

Elsewhere, a similar fraudulent operation involving counterfeit tickets for the Coastal Carolina Fair was [reported](#) by fair officials.

Targeting the vendors

November 2020: Vendors were warned about [two separate bogus craft fairs](#) being promoted in Wyoming. That alert provided several examples of the fake posts made to Facebook pages advertising the events. The promo messages asked for a fee of \$70 to take part.

October 2021: The Hunterdon, New Jersey Sheriff's office warns of an [elaborate scam](#) involving fake fairs and requests for vendors to book a booth. Once again, it originated on social media. The fraudsters pulled out all the stops, offering no fewer than three separate craft events across November and December. This attack moved from social media to email, sending potential victims a link to an external site requesting payment information.

November 2021: Napierville, Illinois was the [latest location](#) of \$40 a day fakeouts targeting vendors. As usual, vendors were asked to complete forms and submit payment online. Time was once again taken up for law enforcement while they put out alerts warning people away from the non-existent event.

November 2021: Law enforcement warned of a [scam originating outside the US](#), targeting vendors in the Hendersonville, North Carolina region. Though they didn't say what kind of social media post set the scam rolling, it's likely they followed the Facebook pattern seen so many times elsewhere.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Credit card skimmers in fake images
SOURCE	https://blog.sucuri.net/2022/05/woocommerce-credit-card-skimmers-concealed-in-fake-images.html?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Our research and remediation teams have noticed an increase in WooCommerce credit card skimmers on client sites over the past few years, as detailed in past blog posts.</p> <p>Due to the increased number of plugins and components facilitating online payments and its ease of use, WordPress has become a common e-commerce platform — and the frequency in which the popular CMS is being targeted by attackers aiming to steal sensitive personal information and credit card details is also accelerating.</p> <p>We recently uncovered a case where a credit card swiper had been injected into WordPress' wp-settings.php file. The only symptom our customer reported was that images were disappearing from the WooCommerce cart almost as soon as they were uploaded.</p> <p>Attackers often like to place malicious content out of the way so it is more difficult to detect. One tactic they use is to create directories that look like system directories, or to place malware in existing core CPanel or other server directories.</p>

After decoding the entire file, we found additional obfuscated content — most importantly, right at the top of the decoded output, we found functions to store credit card data concealed in the **wp-content/uploads/highend/dyncamic.jpg** image file.

Upon inspection, we could see several additional lines of obfuscated data.

When decoded, that data revealed not only credit card details submitted to the site, but also admin credentials to the site's backend. We ran a couple of test transactions against the site to confirm the behavior and, sure enough, our test data had been logged in the image file.

This is not the first time that we have seen attackers [export stolen credit card details to image files](#). This begs the question: Why? There are a couple reasons why this is a useful tactic. For starters, it makes it very easy for the attackers to download the stolen details in their browser or a console. Secondly, most website/server malware detection scans focus on website file extensions such as **PHP**, **JS**, and **HTML**. Image files, particularly those in a **wp-content/uploads** sub-directories, can sometimes be overlooked.

Conclusion & Mitigation Steps

This infection is a great example of the importance of running frequent core file integrity checks, as well as [monitoring](#) your environment for any file changes. Most WordPress security plugins will include core file consistency checks. Since most core files shouldn't change unless you have upgraded your WordPress version, any changes to the core files should be treated as suspicious and could indicate malware. If you don't have one already, make sure to [get file integrity monitoring installed](#) on your site!

It's also worth noting that you should always keep your plugins and themes up to date. If you have any plugins or themes installed that are not being used you should also remove them, even if they are updated. Attackers are always looking for weak points and just because a vulnerability has not been documented does not mean one does not exist.

By default, WordPress allows the editing of files directly from the **wp-admin** dashboard. This makes it convenient to modify your website, but makes it equally convenient for attackers to place their payload. Adding some additional authentication [requirements](#) on your admin panel is essential for maintaining a secure website.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Google searches for 'UHaul' spike after leak
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/3/google-searches-u-haul-spike-after-report-supreme/
GIST	<p>Online searches for U-Haul services spiked after a report that the Supreme Court is preparing to overturn the landmark Roe v. Wade ruling on the right to an abortion, according to an online gambling site.</p> <p>Google searches for “Uhaul” increased 1,328% over normal from Monday night into Tuesday, according to research by Time2play.com, apparently from Web users researching ways to move out of states that may soon adopt abortion bans.</p> <p>Searches for U-Haul services in Ohio, which has restrictive abortion laws, jumped 4,900%. In Texas, searches spiked 2,400%, the company said.</p> <p>States with liberal leadership are vowing to pass laws guaranteeing abortion services if the Supreme Court does overturn Roe and allows individual states to ban or sharply restrict access to abortion. The new ruling in a Mississippi case has not yet been released, but a draft opinion supposedly striking down Roe was leaked Monday night.</p> <p>The political fallout of the leaked draft opinion, which the Supreme Court acknowledged Tuesday was authentic but said did not necessarily represent the court's final ruling, could come quickly.</p>

	<p>Ohio is holding primary elections on Tuesday, and Democratic Senate candidate Rep. Tim Ryan said in a fundraising email that overturning Roe “would be catastrophic for Ohio.”</p> <p>“Republicans have introduced one extreme proposal after another to ban abortion before most women even know they’re pregnant,” Mr. Ryan said. “If we can flip this seat, we can expand the Democratic majority and protect the right to an abortion. The stakes of our battleground Senate race have never been higher. Every single one of my GOP opponents supports dangerous, restrictive anti-abortion laws.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 BECU investigating possible ATM hacks
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/becu-investigating-possible-atm-hacks
GIST	<p>TUKWILA, Wash. — Boeing Employees Credit Union (BECU) said some of its members' account information may have been compromised via the institution's ATMs.</p> <p>The local credit union is investigating if any of its Seattle-area ATMs were hacked. BECU didn't specify which locations may have been targeted.</p> <p>BECU said it is working with law enforcement and will contact its members if their accounts were hacked.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	05/03 Man in ISIS-inspired plot competent for trial
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/man-charged-in-isis-inspired-plot-found-mentally-competent/
GIST	<p>COLLEGE PARK, Md. (AP) — A Maryland man has become mentally competent to stand trial more than two years after he was charged with planning an Islamic State-inspired attack at a shopping and entertainment complex near Washington, D.C., a federal judge ruled Tuesday.</p> <p>Rondell Henry’s attorneys notified the court last Friday that he intends to pursue an insanity defense. Henry, 31, of Germantown, Maryland, was charged in 2019 with attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization, the Islamic State group.</p> <p>U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis agreed Tuesday to order a psychiatric examination of Henry to determine whether he was insane around the time of his alleged offenses. The judge also ruled Henry is mentally competent to stand trial, can understand the charges against him and is capable of assisting in his defense.</p> <p>Xinis had ruled in February 2020 that Henry was not competent to stand trial. She repeatedly extended Henry’s court-ordered hospitalization.</p> <p>But the judge said a March 31 report on Henry’s medical condition found experts had restored his mental competence and that he is “doing much better.” Defense attorney Christian Lassiter, an assistant federal public defender, said he does not dispute that finding.</p> <p>“In fact, I think it corresponds directly with my own direct observations (of Henry),” Lassiter added.</p> <p>When Xinis asked Henry how he is feeling, he said, “I’m feeling good.”</p> <p>“Are you feeling well enough to make decisions for yourself?” the judge asked.</p> <p>“Yes, I do,” Henry replied.</p> <p>The judge said Henry appears to be “quite keyed in and healthy, which is good.”</p>

Henry is accused of stealing a U-Haul van in Virginia and parking it at the National Harbor, a popular waterfront destination just outside the nation's capital. Police arrested him the next morning after they found the van and saw Henry jump over a security fence.

Henry told investigators he planned to carry out an attack like one in which a driver ran over and killed dozens of people in Nice, France, in 2016, authorities said. A federal prosecutor has said Henry intended to kill as many "disbelievers" as possible.

In 2019, a court-appointed forensic psychologist from the Federal Bureau of Prisons found "ample evidence" that Henry was mentally unfit to assist in his defense.

Henry has been detained at a federal medical facility in Butner, North Carolina. He does not have a trial date yet. The judge scheduled a June 27 status hearing for the case.

Prosecutors have said Henry watched Islamic State group propaganda videos of foreign terrorists beheading civilians and fighting overseas. Investigators said they recovered a phone Henry had discarded on a highway in an apparent attempt to conceal evidence, including images of the Islamic State flag, armed Islamic State fighters and the man who carried out the 2016 Pulse nightclub massacre in Orlando, Florida.

Henry is a naturalized U.S. citizen who moved to the country from Trinidad and Tobago more than a decade ago.

The terrorism charge he faces is punishable by a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. Henry also faces a stolen vehicle charge that carries a maximum of 10 years in prison.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Taliban fighters learn about human rights
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/may/03/taliban-swap-guns-for-pens-to-learn-about-human-rights
GIST	<p>Around a conference room table, young Taliban fighters quietly listen to an instructor teaching them how to behave with civilians.</p> <p>Awkwardly armed with notebooks and pens, most of the 25 fighters turned policemen have never been in a classroom before. They have spent most of their young lives as combatants in rural areas, and under their ample traditional outfits, their wrist-sized ankles betray how undernourished they are.</p> <p>"What is the problem with bringing weapons inside a hospital?" trainer Raouf asks.</p> <p>"People will be scared," a young Taliban member answers.</p> <p>"It will have a bad effect on sick people," another says.</p> <p>This two-day class on international humanitarian law (IHL), organised by Geneva Call, a humanitarian organisation, takes place in Kandahar, southern Afghanistan.</p> <p>"Did you ever bring your gun inside the hospital?" Raouf asks. All the fighters laugh. "Yes," they say, "of course!"</p> <p>The rules of IHL can seem obvious: you cannot punish someone you arrest before they go to court; boys under 18 are children and should not fight; or "if someone is not fighting against you, you should not fight them".</p> <p>But, Raouf says, these students "have no knowledge of all these things, they were in the mountains with only guns".</p>

Since October, Raouf has trained 250 men in Kandahar. “If we continue, I am sure they will change. I have seen a lot of changes already.”

After class, the fighters say they will modify some behaviours. “I will not enter hospitals with weapons any more,” says Barakatullah, 28. “It was also new for me to hear that we have to respect the human dignity of prisoners.”

During the course, Barakatullah had stood up to speak about the torture he’d endured at Bagram jail, where he spent eight years.

But the young man, with his long black beard and soft eyes, seems more weary than angry. After losing all his family except his mother in a US airstrike, all he wishes for is “a normal life”.

“If I can find another job, I would leave the police. I can be a shopkeeper or work for an NGO.”

According to Ashley Jackson, co-director of the Centre for the Study of Armed Groups at the Overseas Development Institute, it is important to keep engaging with the Taliban.

“Even small changes to their behaviour could save lives,” she says.

In the classroom, all students wear a turban or a small traditional hat. Some regularly raise their hands to answer. Others fidget with their prayer beads at the back, struggling to sit still.

Fighters readily agree with preventing gender violence, but some topics call for more tact, like the use of improvised explosive devices (IED), suicide bombers or any act that may hurt civilians.

Taliban soldiers, since their return to power, have often killed civilians because their vehicles didn’t stop at checkpoints.

“The Taliban have transitioned from a fighting force to a government almost overnight – with almost no preparation, training or understanding of things like human rights norms,” says Jackson.

“There are horrific problems with torture and beating in Taliban detention. And the Taliban isn’t doing much to address that, so it’s really up to others to try whatever they can to prevent more suffering.”

Kefayatullah, 22, one of those on the course, now works in a jail.

“I learned yesterday that we should behave humanely with prisoners,” he says.

“When I went back to the prison where I work, a person called saying that the mother of a prisoner wanted to talk to her son. Before, we were not allowing this. But because of the training, I gave my mobile to the prisoner to speak to his mother.”

About 60% of the students cannot read, some have only attended religious classes in rural madrasas.

“I’d like to restart my education and learn English. After class yesterday, I told my friends we should ask for a teacher to come to the police headquarters,” says Kefayatullah.

During the break, the fighters stay seated, laugh and take pictures of each other. It is an image far removed from the one they often project in propaganda videos.

According to Faryaneh Fadaei, Geneva Call’s director for Afghanistan, the key to the training’s success is to adapt the material to cultural sensitivities, with each rule linked to Islamic references

	<p>“Because it is contextualised, developed with community leaders and religious scholars, it is accepted,” says Fadaei.</p> <p>“Usually after the training, the participants ask for more training and booklets to give to their friends.”</p> <p>Geneva Call trains between 200 and 400 people a month across Afghanistan, half of them members of armed forces.</p> <p>Maiwandi, 21, is in the Taliban’s elite special forces. Seated at the back in his military jacket, he struggles to concentrate. Maiwandi joined the Taliban at 12. At 19, faced with brutal US raids in his village, he enrolled as a suicide bomber.</p> <p>“This war took the best years of my life, my childhood and my education,” he says. “Now when I see people who are educated, who went to university, I feel bad and wish I was them.”</p> <p>Like Barakatullah or Kefayatullah, Maiwandi represents the importance of Geneva Call’s training for young Taliban members who have only known violence.</p> <p>After the course, Maiwandi says he would love to study more in future but adds that, if asked by his leadership, he would do what he’d signed up for, as a suicide bomber.</p> <p>Still, perhaps, he hopes “there will be no more war”.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Claim: CIA captive too small for waterboard
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/03/us/politics/uss-cole-waterboarding-torture.html
GIST	<p>GUANTÁNAMO BAY, Cuba — The psychologist who for the C.I.A. waterboarded a prisoner accused of plotting the U.S.S. Cole bombing testified this week that the Saudi man broke quickly and became so compliant that he would crawl into a cramped crate even before guards ordered him inside.</p> <p>The psychologist, James E. Mitchell, also told a military judge that the prisoner, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, was so scrawny that Dr. Mitchell and his interrogation partner, John Bruce Jessen, stopped waterboarding him after the third session at a secret site in Thailand in 2002 because they feared he might be hurt.</p> <p>In that instance, they put him in a neck brace and strapped him to gurney that served as the board. But when they tilted the board up to let him breathe after a “40-second pour,” the 5-foot-5, 120-pound prisoner nearly slid out of the straps to the floor, Dr. Mitchell said.</p> <p>“He was snorting and blowing water out of his nose,” Dr. Mitchell testified. A former career military psychologist who said he learned the techniques at an Air Force survival school, Dr. Mitchell said the waterboarding episodes were so long ago that he could not recall whether the prisoner actually cried.</p> <p>Defense lawyers for Mr. Nashiri questioned Dr. Mitchell on Monday and Tuesday about what went on for several weeks in the black site in November 2002. His testimony was meant to offer an account of what may been on videotapes that senior C.I.A. leaders destroyed at a time when the Senate Intelligence Committee was investigating the black site activities.</p> <p>Mr. Nashiri, who was captured in Dubai in 2002, is accused of being the mastermind of the Qaeda suicide bombing of the Cole off Yemen in 2000, an attack that killed 17 U.S. sailors. His case is still in pretrial proceedings, and his lawyers have been calling witnesses in a long-running effort to exclude government evidence from his eventual death penalty trial. They argue that some of the case the evidence is contaminated by torture or other U.S. misbehavior.</p> <p>No rulings are expected soon on any of the key issues. In his testimony, Dr. Mitchell described his treatment of the defendant — to condition him to answer questions in interrogation — as having been strictly monitored by C.I.A. doctors and authorized by Justice Department lawyers.</p>

Discussing the confinement box where the psychologists kept some prisoners, Dr. Mitchell said he and Dr. Jessen built it with the assistance of C.I.A. personnel to duplicate one that had been used to train certain Air Force personnel to survive capture and interrogation by the enemy.

At first, guards had to order the Saudi prisoner into the box, but in time, the prisoner “liked being in the box,” Dr. Mitchell said. “He’d get in and close it himself.”

Mr. Nashiri was absent from the hearing, voluntarily, and therefore did not hear the descriptions of his being held in a crude cell, nude and under bright lights — with the box kept there as well. Nor did he see a replica of the box that his Pentagon-paid defense team had built based on specifications cited in a Senate study of the C.I.A. black site program.

“When I heard him talk, I got the image of crate-training a dog and became nauseous,” said Annie W. Morgan, a former Air Force defense lawyer who serves on Mr. Nashiri’s legal team. “That was the goal of the program: to create a sense of learned helplessness and to become completely dependent upon and submissive to his captors.

Dr. Mitchell also described some of the abuse Mr. Nashiri endured later in 2002 after the psychologist delivered the detainee to Afghanistan and the custody of the C.I.A.’s chief interrogator at the next black site. For Mr. Nashiri, it was the fourth stop on what would become a four-year odyssey of C.I.A. detention through 10 secret overseas sites.

The episodes Dr. Mitchell described included:

- A member of an interrogation team used a belt to strap Mr. Nashiri’s arms behind his back and lift him up from behind to “his tiptoes,” Dr. Mitchell said. The prisoner howled, and Dr. Mitchell said he protested, fearing Mr. Nashiri’s shoulders would be dislocated. The treatment continued.
- Guards forced a shackled Mr. Nashiri into his knees then bent him backward, with a broomstick placed behind the prisoner’s knees.
- The chief interrogator, ostensibly seeking to train Mr. Nashiri to address him as “sir,” used a stiff bristle brush to give Mr. Nashiri a cold-water bath, then scraped the brush from the prisoner’s anus to his face and mouth.

Dr. Mitchell said he learned only in recent days — from case prosecutors — that Mr. Nashiri had been subjected to “rectal feeding,” a procedure he said was mostly handled by C.I.A. doctors for medical reasons, except when the chief interrogator in Afghanistan chose to use it.

The Senate intelligence report on the program, which was made public in 2014, disclosed the practice of having agency medical staff insert a tube into the rectum of a C.I.A. prisoner who refused to eat or drink and then infusing liquid or puréed food into the detainee. Prisoners and their lawyers have described the procedure as rape. Majid Khan, a Qaeda courier, told a court last year that, when he was forced to undergo the procedure, the C.I.A. used “green garden hoses.”

Dr. Mitchell also briefly mentioned learning of the chief interrogator questioning Mr. Nashiri with a power drill and a gun in the period after he was waterboarded. Dr. Mitchell said he did not witness the conduct but reported it to C.I.A. headquarters, which had the inspector general investigate and disclose the misbehavior.

Dr. Mitchell described the cruel treatment as unnecessary and unapproved. After Mr. Nashiri was waterboarded and subjected to other “physical coercion,” including being slammed against a wall and held in the confinement box, he began answering questions about imminent attacks, Dr. Mitchell said.

	Dr. Mitchell testified that he would visit black sites where Mr. Nashiri was being held across his four years of C.I.A. custody — including a secret site where he was held at Guantánamo Bay in 2003 and 2004 — to reinforce the prisoner’s cooperation with those questioning him. He would remind Mr. Nashiri, he said, that he did not want to return to “the hard times,” an allusion to the era of “enhanced interrogation.”
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HEADLINE	05/03 Al-Shabaab attacks major AU military base
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/03/africa/al-shabaab-attacks-military-base-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>MogadishuCNN — As Somalis are celebrating Eid Al-Fitr for the second day, the Al-Qaeda-linked terrorist group Al-Shabaab launched a dawn attack on a major military base housing AU forces, witnesses and officials said.</p> <p>Col Muse Hassan, a Somali military commander in Middle Shabelle region, told CNN that heavily armed Al-Shabaab gunmen attacked the Burundian base in El-Baraf, some 160 km north of the capital Mogadishu, from different directions early Tuesday.</p> <p>Hassan said a suicide car bomber drove into the main gates of the base, allowing the fighters to enter the camp, where they engaged in a heavy gunfight with the AU soldiers for about an hour. The base is located along the main road connecting Mogadishu to northern parts of the country.</p> <p>In a statement posted on its affiliated websites, Al-Shabaab claimed its fighters killed 59 soldiers as they have taken control of the base, but authorities have not confirmed those claims nor the number of possible casualties. It is the second time the camp has been raided by the terror group this year.</p> <p>“This morning we woke up to a huge explosion and heavy gunfire at the Burundian Army base in El-Baraf, which was attacked from several directions, we do not know how many soldiers were killed, but we saw smoke and flames,” said Hawo Ali, a local resident, who spoke to CNN on the phone.</p> <p>CNN has reached out to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), formally known as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), for comment on the attack.</p> <p>The attack comes as Somalia has sworn in a new parliament on April 14 and is expected to hold a presidential election later this year, after more than a year of delays due to the political crisis. No specific date has been set for the election.</p> <p>The political situation in the country has been further complicated by the power struggle between Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble and President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, which has contributed to the elections delay.</p> <p>Al-Shabaab, a Somali group that the United States designated as a foreign terrorist organization in March 2008, has been fighting for years to topple the central government and establish a rule based on its strict interpretation of Islam’s Sharia law. It has continued to carry out attacks in Mogadishu and elsewhere frequently, despite the government’s and international efforts to stop it.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 UK: man sent Covid relief funds to ISIS
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/03/covid-bounceback-loan-islamic-state-pub-landlord-tarek-namouz
GIST	<p>A former pub landlord has appeared in court accused of sending thousands of pounds in coronavirus bounceback loans to fund the terrorist group Isis in Syria.</p> <p>Tarek Namouz, a 42-year-old former pub landlord from London of no fixed address, faces eight charges of entering into a terror funding arrangement on dates between November 2020 and May 2021. He is also accused of two counts of possessing terrorist information relating to videos.</p>

Return to Top	<p>The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, launched the bounceback loan scheme in May 2020, six weeks into the UK's first coronavirus lockdown, as part of a series of measures to prop up the UK economy. The scheme was aimed at supporting small British businesses, with £47bn paid out in loans from commercial banks guaranteed by the state.</p> <p>On Monday, Namouz appeared at the Old Bailey in London by video link from Wandsworth jail. Jonathan Polnay, prosecuting, said it was alleged that the defendant sent "the proceeds of coronavirus bounceback funding loans to Isis".</p> <p>Mr Justice Sweeney said it was a "serious case" which would be heard by Judge Peter Lodder, the recorder of Richmond, sitting at Kingston crown court. A plea and case management hearing was set for 22 July, with a provisional two-week trial from 21 November.</p> <p>The defendant, who spoke only to confirm his identity, was remanded into custody.</p> <p>Isis, also known as Islamic State, Isil or Daesh, is designated by the UK and 83 other allies as a terrorist organisation.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Yazidis displaced again fear strife in Iraq
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/yazidis-displaced-fear-strife-iraqi-homeland-84473433
GIST	<p>ZAKHO, Iraq -- Iraqis in a northern town still traumatized by memories of the Islamic State group feared more violence Tuesday after hostilities between the military and a local militia erupted, people internally displaced by the fighting said.</p> <p>Tensions reached a fever pitch when Iraq's military launched an offensive in Sinjar district Sunday to clear out armed elements of the YBS, a local militia comprised largely of minority Yazidis.</p> <p>The YBS has ties to the insurgent Kurdistan Worker's Party, or PKK, a separatist movement banned in Turkey.</p> <p>The heavy fighting prompted over 3,000 people, most of them Yazidis, to flee toward the Kurdish-run north. It wasn't clear if there were any dead or wounded in the fighting: Iraqi officials have released no figures and have not commented on casualties.</p> <p>Fighting ceased Tuesday and the Iraqi army said it had re-established control of Sinjar. But the violence and subsequent displacement dealt a blow to Baghdad's efforts to encourage more Yazidis to return to their ancestral homeland after years of war.</p> <p>An agreement was brokered by the United Nations in October 2020 between Baghdad and the Kurdish-run government to implement order in the area. Under that agreement, the federal police are the sole state authority.</p> <p>The accord has not proven successful. Critics have said this is because it did not consult powerful local forces in Sinjar or even Yazidi leaders. Local residents, who also include Arab Sunnis, are also deeply divided.</p> <p>Lt. Gen. Abdul-Amir al-Shammari, deputy commander of Iraq's Joint Operations Command, told a news conference in Sinjar that Iraqi forces have imposed security and law and order and have opened all the roads in the district.</p> <p>"The goal of these operations was to impose the (rule of) law and security to secure a safe environment so that we can rebuild Sinjar and return the displaced."</p> <p>But Yazidis, many displaced now for a second time, are reluctant to return.</p>

	<p>Most of the displaced fled north to the Kurdish-run region where they were distributed across different camps. Many first fled in 2014 after IS's brutal onslaught and returned in recent years to rebuild their homes.</p> <p>The memories are still fresh in Sewe's mind. His was among the dozens of families who made their way to the Chemishko camp in Zakho on Monday. He only gave The Associated Press his first name.</p> <p>"It is the second time that we escaped," he said. "We don't know where to go, we don't have a place to go, and we don't know where we are going now."</p> <p>The YBS was created in 2014 with assistance from the PKK. They proved instrumental in driving out IS elements from the area after the collapse of the Iraqi army. The YBS has since remained a powerful local force in the area, citing deep mistrust of the federal government forces deployed to protect the area.</p> <p>The Iraqi army said the aim of the offensive has been to reassert state authority in response to the YBS erecting checkpoints and preventing citizens from returning to their homes.</p> <p>But most residents expect more violence.</p> <p>"When we went back to our home we found it was impossible to live there," said Rashid Barakat, now displaced in the Chemishko camp. "The army was attacking (the YBS) and the (YBS) was hitting them back, and we were stuck in between."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Nigeria reintegrates repentant militants
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/nigeria-chief-welcomes-reintegration-extremists-84477515
GIST	<p>MAIDUGURI, Nigeria -- United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday lauded Nigerian authorities' ongoing reintegration of defectors from the jihadi Boko Haram group, which has waged a decade-long insurgency, as "the best thing we can do for peace."</p> <p>Speaking to reporters in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state where the insurgency is centered, Guterres also called for more global funding to help rebuild lives in northeast Nigeria where the rebels are operating.</p> <p>"The best thing we can do for peace is to reintegrate those who in the moment of despair became terrorists but now want to ... contribute to the well-being of their brothers and sisters," the U.N. chief said after meeting with former militants at a rehabilitation camp in Maiduguri.</p> <p>The Nigerian military said in March that 1,629 of the former fighters have so far graduated from the reintegration program.</p> <p>In the final leg of his three-nation tour of West Africa, the UN chief is for the first time visiting Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, where he called for donors worldwide to support humanitarian assistance in the northeast.</p> <p>Boko Haram, Nigeria's homegrown Islamic extremist rebels, launched an insurgency in 2009, to fight against western education and to establish Islamic Shariah law in Nigeria.</p> <p>Their rebellion spread over the years to the neighboring West African countries of Cameroon, Niger and Chad. Boko Haram drew international condemnation in 2014 when they abducted 276 schoolgirls in Chibok village, more than 100 of whom are still missing.</p> <p>Before his trip to Nigeria, Guterres was in Niger on Monday where he voiced strong concern over jihadi violence in the Sahel, the vast semi-arid area south of the Sahara Desert. "The international community must realize that this is no longer just a regional or African issue, but a global threat," he said.</p>

	<p>In Nigeria, Guterres visited a camp for people displaced by the violence.</p> <p>“The people I met today want to go back home,” he said. But before they return, he said, authorities must put in place the necessary conditions — “security conditions, development conditions.”</p> <p>The jihadi violence has directly resulted in approximately 35,000 deaths and the displacement of at least 2.1 million people, data from U.N. agencies in Nigeria show.</p> <p>“I will be your advocate asking the international community to support and to invest in the Borno of hope,” Guterres told Borno State Governor Babagana Zulum, who has been leading efforts to relocate the displaced persons back to their communities.</p> <p>Amid the effort to return displaced people to the homes they fled years earlier, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari said on Sunday that the war against the militants is “approaching its conclusion.”</p> <p>But according to the International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based think tank, the jihadist group — especially its most dominant faction the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) — is “consolidating its grip on new rural areas in Nigeria’s central and southern Borno state.”</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	05/04 Star Wars: ‘May the 4 th be with you’
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Odd_News/2022/05/04/Star-Wars-Day-May-the-Fourth-be-with-you/3601651611620/
GIST	<p>May 4 (UPI) -- Star Wars Day, celebrated annually on May 4, started as a fan-led celebration of the science fiction franchise based on the Jedi greeting, "May the Force be with you."</p> <p>The official Star Wars website said Lucasfilm historians believe the phrase "May the 4th be with you" was first used as a Fourth of July greeting in 1978, just one year after the release of the first <i>Star Wars</i> film, which was later retitled <i>Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope</i>.</p> <p>The phrase "May the 4th be with you" was used by an ad in The London Evening News in reference to May 4, 1979, the day British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher took office.</p> <p>Randy Thom, who has worked for Skywalker Sound for more than 40 years, said he came up with the pun while working as a location sound recordist during filming of the third <i>Star Wars</i> movie, <i>Return of the Jedi</i>, on May 4, 1982. Thom said he started sending annual "May the 4th Be With You" messages to the company after sharing his pun with coworkers on set.</p> <p>May 4 started to become an unofficial holiday in the <i>Star Wars</i> fandom over the years, and Lucasfilm started officially acknowledging the holiday in the early 2010s with promoted events and <i>Star Wars</i>-related announcements.</p> <p>The California Legislature officially declared May 4 to be Star Wars Day in 2019. The declaration was timed to coincide with the opening of Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge at Disneyland.</p> <p>Other holidays and observances for May 4 include International Respect for Chickens Day, National Bike to School Day, National Candied Orange Peel Day, National Orange Juice Day and National Weather Observers Day.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Condors soar again north Calif. redwoods
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SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/travel-california-wildlife-parks-national-fefbd6b9ed15698c0b6507fa6f60317d?traffic_source=ConnatixInFeed
GIST	<p>REDWOOD NATIONAL PARK, Calif. (AP) — The endangered California condor returned to soar the skies over the state’s far northern coast redwood forests on Tuesday for the first time in more than a century.</p> <p>Two captive-bred birds were released from a pen in Redwood National Park, about an hour’s drive south of the Oregon border, under a project aimed at restoring the giant vultures to their historic habitat in the Pacific Northwest.</p> <p>The two male condors were moved into staging area at late morning and a remotely controlled gate was opened. After a few minutes of warily eyeing the opening, the birds stepped one by one through the opening, spread their giant wings and took off.</p> <p>“They just jumped up and took flight off into the distance,” Tiana Williams-Claussen, wildlife director for the region’s Yurok tribe, said in a webcast.</p> <p>Condors were last spotted in the park area around 1892, authorities said. The California condor is the largest native North American bird, with a wingspan of nearly 10 feet (3 meters). The scavenger was once widespread but had virtually disappeared by the 1970s because of poaching, lead poisoning from eating animals shot by hunters and destruction of its habitat.</p> <p>The birds can live for 60 years and fly vast distances in search of carrion, so their range could extend into several states.</p> <p>Federal and local fish and wildlife agencies are involved in the restoration project headed by the Yurok tribe, which traditionally has considered the California condor a sacred animal and has been working for years to return the species to the tribe’s ancestral territory.</p> <p>“For countless generations, the Yurok people have upheld a sacred responsibility to maintain balance in the natural world. Condor reintroduction is a real-life manifestation of our cultural commitment to restore and protect the planet for future generations,” tribal Chairman Joseph L. James said in a statement.</p> <p>Two more condors were set to be released later — after biologists determine that the two birds who took to the skies Tuesday have displayed appropriate behavior, authorities said.</p> <p>The condors, including one female and three males, are between 2 and 4 years old. Two were hatched at the Oregon Zoo and two at the Peregrine Fund’s World Center for Birds of Prey in Idaho.</p> <p>In the early 1980s, all 22 condors remaining in the wild were trapped and brought into a captive-breeding program that began releasing the giant vultures into Southern California’s Los Padres National Forest in 1992.</p> <p>That flock has been expanding its range while other condors now occupy parts of California’s Central Coast, Arizona, Utah and Baja California, Mexico. The total population now numbers more than 500 birds in captivity and in the wild.</p> <p>Two years ago, California condors were spotted in Sequoia National Park, in California’s Sierra Nevada, for the first time in nearly 50 years.</p> <p>However, that same year, a dozen adults and two chicks died when a wildfire set by an arsonist ravaged their territory on the Big Sur coast.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Climate change stresses King Co. sewers
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SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/environment/2022/05/how-climate-change-stresses-sewer-systems-king-county
GIST	<p>It was dark and stormy — in other words, an April morning in Seattle — and a mixture of untreated stormwater and raw sewage threatened to flow directly into Salmon Bay, which links Lake Washington and the Puget Sound.</p> <p>Over the next 48 hours, rain would overwhelm a network of tunnels under the city designed to treat the wastewater, sending an unsanitary soup of stormwater, chemicals and sewage spewing from an underwater pipe.</p> <p>The spill would light up King County’s sewer map, an online tool that tracks sewage overflows across the county, effectively marking areas where swimming, fishing and boating should be avoided.</p> <p>Last year alone, the Puget Sound recorded 220 such spills. On average, these spills collectively dump about 93 million gallons of chemical discharge a year — straight into Puget Sound and its surrounding water bodies.</p> <p>Utility officials are working to change that, said Marie Fiore, a spokesperson with King County’s Wastewater Treatment Division.</p> <p>“Combined sewage outflow is never a willful violation,” Fiore said. “The system just gets overwhelmed because it wasn’t built for this weather. It was designed 50 to 60 years ago.”</p> <p>According to a 2017 study by Seattle Public Utilities, what used to be once-in-a-century storms are now expected to happen every 25 years. Sewer infrastructure is expanding to keep up.</p> <p>Construction has already begun on the Ship Canal Water Quality Project, a \$570 million wastewater management collaboration between the Seattle and King County governments.</p> <p>Project executive Keith Ward said the project targets six problematic outfall pipes along the Ship Canal and expects to reduce the number of toxic spills from those pipes to just six per year.</p> <p>“The water bodies we care about — our Lake Union, the Ship Canal and Salmon Bay — those are what we’re really protecting,” Ward said.</p> <p>Failure to protect those water bodies can be costly — especially when you’re working on a deadline.</p> <p>After the county and Seattle saw a number of violations of the Clean Water Act in the mid-2000s, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Justice sought settlements from them. In 2013, the city and the county entered into separate consent decrees with the state Department of Ecology and the EPA, agreeing to reduce such spills to one overflow per outfall pipe per year by 2030.</p> <p>As a part of the agreement, King County has paid \$310,500 in fines since 2013 for wastewater discharge that exceeded the pollution limits outlined in its permits.</p> <p>Now, Seattle and King County officials are under mounting pressure to clean up their act with projects like Ship Canal — but these projects have had to get bigger to withstand their toughest challenge yet: climate change.</p> <p>When it rains ...</p> <p>Near Discovery Park, Seattle’s largest public park, there’s a facility by the water called the West Point Treatment Plant. Both the city and county’s networks of pipes pump sewage and stormwater there for purification.</p> <p>But when rain overwhelms the capacity of the plant, untreated wastewater spills from sewage outfalls across Seattle, including the one in Salmon Bay.</p>

When complete, the Ship Canal tunnel will hold up to 30 million gallons of water during excessive rainfall, and pump it to the nearby West Point facility after the storm has passed. The tunnel — 18 feet, 10 inches wide and 2.7 miles long — would be about the size of a Sound Transit light-rail tunnel, Ward said.

“When rain events happen, we’ll divert water into these drop shafts into the storage tunnel,” Ward said. “It’ll be held there until the rest of the system is ready for it.”

At its current size, the tunnel is expected to prevent about 75 million gallons of wastewater from entering the sound annually — but that wasn’t always going to be the case.

According to city officials, the Ship Canal project had to be modified during design to keep pace with climate change.

The tunnel was made almost 5 feet wider, increasing the storage volume by 15 million gallons from the original design. The change resulted in a cost increase of about \$29 million.

Sabrina Register, a spokesperson for the city of Seattle, said in an email that the modifications were based on changes in historical rainfall and estimates of future climate impacts.

“By the end of 2015, Seattle had experienced the most intense 20-year period in its rainfall history,” Register said. “Current climate science predicts that future rainfall will be even more intense.”

For Shawn McKone, a water quality specialist at the Department of Ecology, the fact that city planners don’t know what rainfall might look like in the future is what makes improving combined sewer systems such a daunting task. The amount of sewage expected to be kept out of the sound by the Ship Canal project, for example, is based on rainfall data from 2018.

"The biggest issue with climate change is just not knowing what the future is going to look like," McKone said.

Wet and dry

King County officials know that a single storm can make a huge difference.

During the dry season, roughly from May to October, the West Point plant needs to treat 90 million gallons of water on a daily average, said Fiore, with King County’s Wastewater Treatment Division. During the wet season, that number nearly quintuples, to 440 million gallons per day.

This year, King County is expected to finish construction on a treatment center designed to bridge that difference.

The Georgetown Wet Weather Treatment Station, which is undergoing performance testing, will operate specifically during wet weather events. With its roughly \$275 million price tag, the station is the county's largest capital project now underway.

Once operational, the plant will treat up to 70 million gallons of wastewater per day on stormy days, supplementing the West Point facility by diverting water that would have otherwise overwhelmed it.

According to Chris Mack, the project’s construction manager, the plant is expected to run about 20 times a year, based on current predictions for the frequency of rain events.

“Of course, for climate change resilience, the plant can be used more frequently to deal with more wet weather,” Mack said.

As the storms on the horizon get bigger, King County officials are looking for more time to prepare. In 2019, the county entered into negotiations with the Ecology Department and the EPA to revise the consent decree.

Negotiations are ongoing but, meanwhile, time may be running out for one crucial Puget Sound inhabitant.

Turning green

Every October, a group of volunteers travels to Longfellow Creek, a West Seattle stream that connects Elliott Bay to the rest of Puget Sound.

The volunteers survey the health of coho salmon — and are finding, on average, that three in five are fatally sick.

Puget Soundkeeper Alliance, a nonprofit organization that monitors the health of waterways in the region, has been organizing these volunteers since 2015. It has been tracking “Urban Runoff Mortality Syndrome,” a deadly disease seen in salmon and caused by stormwater.

Sean Dixon, executive director of Puget Soundkeeper, said the chemical responsible is an antioxidant used in rubber tires. When it rains in urban areas, the stormwater picks up the chemical — known as 6PPD-Quinone — before it enters the sewage system.

After large storms, untreated stormwater mixtures that contain 6PPD-Q flow through outfall pipes and into nearby streams.

“When coho salmon swim through creeks or streams or rivers where 6PPD-Q is present,” Dixon said, “the vast majority will die before they can reach the point in the stream where they’re going to start their spawning.”

In previous years, surveyors have discovered pre-spawn mortality rates of up to 90% among female salmon, which Soundkeeper describes as “an alarmingly high statistic.”

For Dixon, the solution is prevention. He advocates more “green stormwater infrastructure” — a mix of plants, trees and soil that mimic nature and soak up rain before it can reach the sewer system.

Ideally, this green infrastructure complements traditional “gray” infrastructure, like detention tanks and storage tunnels, and would support projects like the Georgetown facility and the Ship Canal tunnel.

According to a 2021 report, Seattle has added green stormwater infrastructure in 8,000 locations across the city, and has incorporated it alongside regular sewage projects into its plan to meet the consent decree targets.

“If we reduce the amount of water that goes into the sewers in the first place,” Dixon said, “We solve the problem.”

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HEADLINE	05/03 Unusual hepatitis cases in children
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/03/health/hepatitis-children-explainer.html
GIST	<p>At least 16 countries and 10 U.S. states have either identified or are investigating reports of unusual hepatitis cases in otherwise healthy children.</p> <p>The cases remain extremely rare, with about 200 children affected worldwide, according to a report issued last week by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.</p> <p>But even these small clusters are unusual. In Britain, where most of the cases have been reported, two pediatric liver units have already had at least as many admissions for acute, unexplained hepatitis in 2022 as they typically have in an entire year, according to a briefing from the U.K. Health Security Agency.</p>

Most children should recover fully, experts said, but some cases have been severe. In [nearly 10 percent of reported cases](#), children have required liver transplants, according to the World Health Organization. There has been at least one death, the W.H.O. said.

The cause remains unknown, but scientists are exploring the possibility that an adenovirus may be responsible. Adenoviruses are common, but they are not usually associated with hepatitis in healthy children. And with many nations only now beginning to look for cases in earnest, the scope of the problem remains unknown.

“It’s still early days,” said Dr. Richard Malley, an infectious disease specialist at Boston Children’s Hospital. “It’s hard to predict whether this will become more common or if, in fact, it will just be a blip in our 2022 infectious-disease story.”

Here’s what scientists know so far.

What is hepatitis?

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver and can have a wide range of causes. Viral infections can cause the condition; the viruses known as hepatitis A, B, C, D and E are all known triggers.

Heavy drinking, as well as certain medications and toxic substances, can also cause hepatitis. In autoimmune hepatitis, the body’s own immune system attacks the liver.

Sudden and severe hepatitis in previously healthy children is uncommon, which is why the new clusters of cases have prompted concern.

Where have the new cases been reported?

In early April, Britain became the first country to notify the W.H.O. of a cluster of unexplained hepatitis cases in children. The cases were unusual because they occurred over a short period of time in otherwise healthy children, and because clinicians quickly ruled out any of the common hepatitis viruses as the cause. They did not identify any patterns in travel, diet, chemical exposures or other risk factors that might explain the outbreak, [according to](#) the U.K. Health Security Agency’s briefing.

Since then, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain and the United States have reported similar cases, the E.C.D.C. said.

In the United States, Alabama recorded nine cases between October and February. Three of the children developed liver failure, and two required liver transplants, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention noted in [a recent report](#). All of the children either recovered or are recovering, the agency noted.

“The two that received the transplant are actually doing quite well,” said Dr. Henry Shiau, a pediatric transplant hepatologist at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the Children’s of Alabama hospital.

The cases prompted the C.D.C. [to issue a nationwide alert](#), asking health care providers to keep an eye out for similar cases.

[Illinois](#) and [Wisconsin](#) have since announced potential cases. North Carolina, Delaware, Minnesota, California, New York, Georgia and Louisiana have also identified, or are investigating, possible cases, state officials told The New York Times.

What are the symptoms?

In many of the cases, children developed gastrointestinal symptoms, including vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain, followed by a yellowing of the skin or eyes, known as jaundice. They also had abnormally high levels of liver enzymes, a sign of liver inflammation or damage.

Gastrointestinal symptoms are common in children and should not, in isolation, be cause for alarm, Dr. Shiau said. But a yellowing of the skin or eyes are more telltale signs of liver problems, he said.

“The likelihood of your child developing hepatitis is extremely low,” Dr. Meera Chand, the director of clinical and emerging infections at the U.K. Health Security Agency, said [in a statement](#). “However, we continue to remind parents to be alert to the signs of hepatitis — particularly jaundice, which is easiest to spot as a yellow tinge in the whites of the eyes — and contact your doctor if you are concerned.”

What’s causing it?

“That’s the million-dollar question,” Dr. Shiau said. “I want to be up front about this: We don’t know.”

But one leading hypothesis is that an adenovirus — one of a group of common viruses that often cause cold-like symptoms — is responsible. Of the 169 cases included in a recent W.H.O. report, at least 74 had an adenovirus infection, the organization said. Eighteen of those children were infected with what is known as adenovirus type 41, which typically causes gastrointestinal and respiratory symptoms.

Adenovirus infections have been on the rise in Britain, where most of the hepatitis cases have been reported, the W.H.O. said.

But the explanation is not a perfect fit. Not all of the children have tested positive for an adenovirus, and while the viruses can cause liver inflammation, that symptom is most common in people who are immunocompromised. “It is not a common cause of liver failure in kids,” said Dr. Aaron Milstone, a pediatric infectious diseases specialist at Johns Hopkins Children’s Center.

It is possible that a new adenovirus strain has emerged or that adenovirus infections are occurring in conjunction with some other risk factor — such as a toxic exposure or an infection with another pathogen — causing these unusually severe outcomes, the U.K. Health Security Agency said.

Or the adenovirus infections could be a red herring. Because the viruses are so common among children, it is difficult to determine whether they are the cause of these hepatitis cases or whether many of the children have been infected incidentally. “Somebody could be infected with adenovirus and then develop hepatitis based on something else,” Dr. Malley said. “For proof of causality you really need a lot of data, which we just don’t have.”

Is this connected to Covid-19?

Probably not directly, experts said. Of the 169 patients identified by the W.H.O., 20 tested positive for the coronavirus. That is not surprising, given how widely the virus has been spreading in recent months, scientists said.

And there is no evidence that the hepatitis is linked to the Covid-19 vaccines; the “vast majority” of the children in question had not been vaccinated, the W.H.O. said.

Still, a coronavirus connection cannot be entirely ruled out, experts cautioned, and the hepatitis cases may be linked to the pandemic in less direct ways. For example, the public health measures implemented over the past two years may have left fewer children exposed to common adenoviruses. That, in turn, might have made them more susceptible now, according to one of the U.K. Health Security Agency’s working hypotheses.

But that, too, is speculative.

“At this point,” Dr. Shiau said, “we still don’t know what’s going on.”

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HEADLINE	05/03 Europe obesity levels ‘epidemic proportion’
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/un-obesity-levels-in-europe-at-epidemic-proportions/

GIST	<p>LONDON (AP) — The World Health Organization says the rates of people who are obese and overweight in Europe have hit “epidemic proportions,” with nearly 60% of adults and a third of children in one of those categories.</p> <p>In a report issued Tuesday, the U.N. health agency’s European office said the prevalence of obesity among adults is higher across the continent than any other world region — except for the Americas.</p> <p>“Alarminglly, there have been consistent increases in the prevalence of overweight and obesity in the WHO European region and no member state is on track to reach the target of halting the rise in obesity by 2025,” the report said. Among the countries it counts in its Europe region, WHO said the highest rates of obesity were seen in Turkey, Malta, Israel and Britain.</p> <p>WHO said being overweight or obese is among the leading causes of death in the region and is responsible for more than 1 million deaths every year.</p> <p>Scientists have long warned that being heavy significantly increases the risk of numerous diseases, including respiratory conditions, diabetes and at least 13 cancers. It is also the leading risk factor for disability.</p> <p>“During the COVID-19 pandemic, we experienced the true impact of the obesity epidemic,” WHO Europe director Dr. Hans Kluge wrote in the report. He noted that the obese were “more likely to experience severe outcomes of the COVID-19 disease spectrum, including intensive care unit admissions and death.”</p> <p>Kluge also said that COVID-19 interventions like school closures and lockdowns often raised the risk of gaining weight when people turned to unhealthy diets and were forced to be sedentary.</p> <p>WHO called for countries to adopt policies to improve “environmental factors” linked to obesity, including taxing sugary drinks, restricting the marketing of unhealthy foods to children and efforts to improve physical activity.</p> <p>In the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says about 74% of Americans over age 20 are obese or overweight.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Olympic Peninsula glaciers gone by 2070?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/glaciers-on-olympic-peninsula-projected-to-largely-disappear-by-2070/
GIST	<p>Hotter summers and wetter winters spell a precarious future for glaciers in the Pacific Northwest.</p> <p>This is especially true for those in low elevations, so much that, according to new research published last month, glaciers on the Olympic Peninsula could largely disappear by 2070.</p> <p>While glaciers come in all shapes and sizes — and those at higher elevations are generally less affected by warming temperatures — the losses predicted in the study carry heavy implications for the region’s ecology, geography and climate as the planet continues to warm due to fossil fuel emissions.</p> <p>The report, which was published in April in the Journal of Geophysical Research Earth Surface, relied on a combination of field observations, aerial photographs, maps and inventories to assess how glaciers have changed since the early 1980s and, beyond that, how they’ve reacted to environmental changes since they were first photographed by the U.S. Army in 1980.</p> <p>“These glaciers — all glaciers — affect high alpine water resources,” said Andrew Fountain, the report’s lead author and a professor of geology and geography at Portland State University. “Meaning the glaciers act as frozen reservoirs of water that release their water when we need it the most, and that’s during the hot, dry parts of the summer.”</p>

Natural ecosystems depend heavily on that cycle.

“That’s all going to change.”

A glacier can “disappear” when it ceases to move, at which point it will stop being classified as a glacier and become an ice patch or a perennial snowfield. This could be the future of several glaciers on the Olympic Peninsula, Fountain said, as they shrink and retreat into “niches in the landscape” protected by cold air and shade.

Located on the western peninsula of the state, Olympic National Park is home to the Olympic Mountains and approximately 200 glaciers. About half of its glacial area has disappeared since 1900.

More recently, the peninsula has lost 35 glaciers and 16 perennial snowfields since 1980.

[Washington is the second most glaciated state in the country](#) with about 173 square miles of glaciers, perennial snow and other ice features. Alaska leads the country with a breathtaking 3,474 square miles, while Wyoming comes in third with just under 29 square miles.

The recent study is one part of a growing understanding of the effect climate change is having on [the glaciology of the Puget Sound region](#), whose hills were shaped in large part by an ice sheet a mile thick during the last ice age.

Washington State Climatologist Nick Bond pointed out that what’s happening or will happen with low-elevation glaciers does not necessarily foreshadow what could happen with those at high elevations. At just under 8,000 feet, Mount Olympus is the highest point in the Olympic Mountains, whereas the volcanic peaks of the Cascades soar well beyond 14,000 feet.

In theory, glaciers at higher elevation will outlast their low-lying counterparts.

“We are anticipating wetter winters,” he said. “In some places that will mean more snow.”

Snow that could eventually be compressed into glacial ice.

But the implications of melting glaciers are many, Bond said.

The surface area of glacial and perennial ice has declined significantly over the past century in most parts of the state. Such ice features have shrunk by nearly 40% on Mount Rainier between 1896 and 2015. Glacial loss since 1900 has reached about 56% in the North Cascades.

Warmer temperatures compounded by decreasing precipitation could upset the seasonal cycle during which, traditionally, glaciers retreat during the summer and recover in the winter.

Smaller glaciers mean less stream flow, which could then lead to increases in water temperatures. Warming waters are perilous for aquatic habitats and the forms of life that depend on them.

Loss of glacial ice can also lead to more erosion and alter stream flows, which together can release large amounts of sediment into the watershed. While not all sediment is bad, this can make it difficult for salmon, trout and other aquatic creatures to hunt, hide or spawn offspring.

Attempts have been made to develop technology to delay or prevent glacial melting, like using reflective materials to protect the ice from the sun, or constructing ice stupas, which are frozen, vertical structures that allow water to be stored longer and in dryer places. But these are temporary solutions that don’t address the underlying cause of glacial melting, Fountain said.

	"I don't see any way to save the glaciers unless we begin to eliminate fossil fuels," he said. "What we're seeing here is part of the consistent story with climate change."
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	05/04 Mexico: cartel cleared, others storm in
SOURCE	https://dnyuz.com/2022/05/04/in-mexico-one-cartel-is-cleared-but-others-storm-in/
GIST	<p>EL AGUAJE, Mexico — Antonio had grown limes and raised cattle on his farm in western Mexico for years, managing to eke out a living by following a rule he and many others in Michoacán, one of Mexico's most violent states, had always known: Leave the narco-trafficking routes alone and no harm would come their way.</p> <p>But now the valley of lime trees that once made this region prosperous had been set on fire, a casualty of the drug cartels' emerging business model.</p> <p>Some criminal groups are going to unprecedented lengths to muscle into mainstream sectors of the economy, including avocados and limes, threatening to disrupt the lucrative, bilateral trade partnership between Mexico and the United States, one of the largest in the world.</p> <p>Mexico exports \$3.2 billion worth of avocados and \$500 million of limes annually, and some cartels are forcing their way into these profitable businesses, not only extorting them as they have for years, but also running the operations themselves. Some are even planting orchards and opening avocado packing plants to diversify their revenues and fund their efforts to capture more territory.</p> <p>"There is an evolution toward a classic Italian-style criminal-political relationship," Romain Le Cour, the program director for México Evalúa, a research institute focused on public security policies, said of the cartels. "When you think of the mafia, it's a gray zone where you tie legal with illegal, the crime with business and the crime with politics."</p> <p>This evolution has even emboldened the cartels to threaten the American government's presence throughout the country, Mr. Le Cour added, as criminal groups "understand that they have more power than anyone else, the government or the businesses they extort."</p> <p>Increasingly, farmers and communities tied to the agricultural trade have been caught in the middle of a turf war, while tens of thousands of others have been displaced, as the government struggles to clear out the gangs and quell the violence.</p> <p>"It's a conflict that never ends," Antonio said bitterly, asking that only his middle name be used to protect his identity.</p> <p>A recent military clearing operation in El Aguaje allowed families who fled the cartel violence to return in February. They drove through clouds of smoke billowing from the smoldering valley, past their ruined town square with its buildings pockmarked by bullets and graffiti: C.J.N.G., the Spanish acronym for Jalisco New Generation Cartel — the region's most powerful cartel.</p> <p>Some people, like Antonio, came back to work the farms they had been forced to temporarily abandon. Many returned only to pack up their belongings and leave again.</p> <p>Hardly anyone in El Aguaje believed the government gains would last, as the town had been contested by various criminal groups for years. Recent military operations focused on the Jalisco cartel, but the newly scorched orchards were a clear sign that other cartels were trying to move in to fill the void.</p>

In Michoacán, until recent months the only Mexican state licensed to export avocados to the United States, the cartels have cut down protected forests, forcing the population off the land to establish their own orchards. And they have started extorting minor producers, previously considered too small to be worth the trouble.

While there is no clear estimate on the extent to which these criminal groups have affected trade, the net profits from their international operations could reach up to \$20 billion annually, nearly 2 percent of Mexico's gross domestic product, according to an American official who was not authorized to give his name.

In February, a criminal group even threatened a U.S. inspector when he rejected a batch of cartel avocados masquerading as Michoacán produce, prompting a brief American ban on Mexican avocados, the first ever in the decades-long avocado trade between the countries.

The threat further signaled the growing audacity of Michoacán's criminal organizations, which for more than 35 years have largely avoided targeting U.S. government employees.

The month before, U.S. Border Patrol agents were shot at from Mexico, most likely by cartel members involved in smuggling migrants. And in March, the American Consulate in the Mexican state of Nuevo Laredo was fired upon after the authorities extradited a cartel leader to the United States.

The Jalisco cartel began an aggressive drive to overrun small cities and towns in western parts of Michoacán in 2020, cutting off vital roads and stretches of highway, making much of the state impassable. Last year, it took control and dug trenches along swaths of a major highway that links the state and took over Aguililla, a small city that hosts a military base. Mexican troops stationed there had to be resupplied by helicopter as they avoided directly engaging the cartels.

The cartel, considered one of Mexico's largest and most gruesome, has since developed new enforcement tactics, recently introducing improvised explosive devices buried in dirt roads and fields to cut off population centers.

Even after government forces carry out clearing operations, the area lacks enough state, municipal and federal troops to defend the territory. Police officers are regularly fired for corruption, retire or resign because of the soaring violence and meager pay.

In El Aguaje, the orchard fires were set by the Viagras, a group that is part of a criminal collective called the United Cartels. They took control in September 2020 and started ransacking the town.

"They were breaking and entering, robbing our houses, stealing everything they could — farm animals, goats, horses," Antonio said. "They took everything, everything, panties even from the elders. What do you want a pair of used panties for?"

Last year, the Jalisco cartel pushed the Viagras out and took power. It largely left the population alone — so long as locals residents did not disrupt the flow of drugs.

Outside town, the Viagras started taxing everything from cattle to limes, sometimes asking for as much as a third of farmers' revenues. The military finally intervened in February, but seemed focused on clearing out only the Jalisco cartel.

As that group retreated, the Viagras set the orchards ablaze so their rivals could not take cover to carry out counterattacks against them.

Security analysts say the government's strategy has been selective, waging battles largely against the Jalisco cartel, but not the smaller groups that equally terrorize residents.

“In the past we have seen pushes against groups that pose a P.R. problem for the government, and Jalisco’s tactics were getting too brutal to ignore,” said Falko Ernst, a senior analyst for the International Crisis Group.

“I’m not seeing positive signs that the government will expand its current operation to go against other groups like the Viagras,” he added.

Mexico’s president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, rode to power in 2018 on the slogan “hugs not bullets,” promising to tackle the cartels by increasing spending on social programs.

But halfway through his term, Mr. López Obrador’s strategy has not worked. In 2021, there was a nearly fivefold increase from the previous year of internally displaced Mexicans — 44,905 people — who fled cartel violence, according to Mexico’s Commission for Defense and Promotion of Human Rights. Thousands more have gone north, trying to cross into the United States and seek asylum.

That has not stopped the president from claiming victory, recently announcing that he had ended Michoacán’s internal displacement problem and that residents who had fled could return. Shortly after his remarks, 17 people were marched out of a funeral and executed, a prominent journalist was killed and a local trade leader was gunned down.

Still, the governor of Michoacán, Alfredo Ramírez Bedolla, an ally of Mr. López Obrador, said he believed the president’s strategy would persuade residents to return.

“The military has done an exceptional job of recovering these territories,” Mr. Ramírez said in an interview in February. “Now comes the part of the civil government, building infrastructure and economic development.”

Infrastructure spending in Michoacán has lagged behind much of the nation for years, but Mr. Ramírez promised a \$183 million investment plan for this year, tripling the state’s 2020 infrastructure budget.

With little faith in the government’s ability to protect them, some towns have decided to take up arms. In Tancítaro — known as the world’s avocado capital — the city established a self-defense unit in 2014, tired of cartels extorting their crops, assaulting their women and kidnapping their children for ransom.

Tancítaro’s mayor, Gerardo Mora Mora, said they had to choose between defending themselves or “see our future end.”

The Tierra Caliente region of Michoacán, the area at the crossroads of the state where El Aguaje is nestled, was recently the scene of fierce fighting. Home to the leader of the Jalisco cartel, Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, known as “El Mencho” — one of the most wanted men in Mexico and the United States — it was strategically situated for the cartel to move drugs, while the Viagras sought to control the region to extort lime farmers.

On a recent visit to Naranjo de Chila, Mr. Cervantes’s hometown, a resident recalled how the military and the Viagras laid siege to the town and prevented food from coming in for eight months. During the siege, the Jalisco cartel erected a warehouse to supply the trapped townspeople: medicine for the sick, food for the starving. It brought in supplies by small propeller plane, the resident added.

The Jalisco soldiers trained at the town square, performing drills as residents looked on. On one side of the square was a cavernous workshop where the cartel created its “monsters,” or sports utility vehicles they souped-up by welding metal plates to the doors to make them bulletproof and assault-ready.

Three days before the military finally breached Naranjo de Chila, the Jalisco cartel fled, residents said. Before leaving, it used a backhoe to bury its heavy weapons.

	<p>Some residents accused the government of collaborating with the Viagras, which Mr. Ramírez, Michoacán's governor, denied. "What there is, is a great advance by the army, of the federal government."</p> <p>But the advance inspired little faith.</p> <p>"The town felt safer under Jalisco cartel," said a resident, who asked that his name not be used, fearing retaliation. "We don't like them, but we don't like the government more."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/04 Chinese hackers stole trillions in IP thefts
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/chinese-hackers-took-trillions-in-intellectual-property-from-about-30-multinational-companies/
GIST	<p>A yearslong malicious cyber operation spearheaded by the notorious Chinese state actor, APT 41, has siphoned off an estimated trillions in intellectual property theft from approximately 30 multinational companies within the manufacturing, energy and pharmaceutical sectors.</p> <p>A new report by Boston-based cybersecurity firm, Cybereason, has unearthed a malicious campaign — dubbed <i>Operation CuckooBees</i> — exfiltrating hundreds of gigabytes of intellectual property and sensitive data, including blueprints, diagrams, formulas, and manufacturing-related proprietary data from multiple intrusions, spanning technology and manufacturing companies in North America, Europe, and Asia.</p> <p>"We're talking about Blueprint diagrams of fighter jets, helicopters, and missiles," Cybereason CEO Lior Div told CBS News. In pharmaceuticals, "we saw them stealing IP of drugs around diabetes, obesity, depression." The campaign has not yet been stopped.</p> <p>Cybercriminals were focused on obtaining blueprints for cutting-edge technologies, the majority of which were not yet patented, Div said.</p> <p>The intrusion also exfiltrated data from the energy industry – including designs of solar panel and edge vacuum system technology. "This is not [technology] that you have at home," Div noted. "It's what you need for large-scale manufacturing plants."</p> <p>The report doesn't disclose a list of affected companies, but researchers found the cyber espionage campaign — which had been operating undetected since at least early 2019 — collected information that could be used for future cyberattacks or for potential extortion campaigns — details about companies' business units, network architecture, user accounts and credentials, employee emails and customer data.</p> <p>Cybereason first caught wind of the operation in April of 2021, after a company flagged a potential intrusion during a business pitch meeting with the cybersecurity firm. Analysts reverse engineered the attack to uncover every step malicious actors took inside the environment, discovering APT 41 "maintained full access to everything in the network in order for them to pick and choose the right information that they needed to collect."</p> <p>That full access enabled cybercriminals to exfiltrate tedious amounts of information required to duplicate complicated engineering, including rocket propelled weapons. "For example, to rebuild a missile there are hundreds of pieces of information that you need to steal in a specific way in order to be able to recreate and rebuild that technology," Div said.</p> <p>APT 41 or "Winnti" – which also goes by affiliate names BARIUM and Blackfly – remains one of the most prolific and successful a Chinese state-sponsored threat groups, with a history of launching CCP backed espionage activity and financially motivated attacks on U.S. and other international targets, routinely aligned with China's Five-Year economic development plans.</p>

In May 2021, the [Justice Department charged four Chinese nationals](#) connected to APT 41 for their participation in a global computer intrusion campaign targeting intellectual property and sensitive business information.

The FBI estimated in its report that the annual cost to the U.S. economy of counterfeit goods, pirated software, and theft of trade secrets is between \$225 billion and \$600 billion.

But researchers from Cybereason say it is hard to estimate the exact economic impact of *Operation CuckooBees* due to the complexity, stealth and sophistication of the attacks, as well as the long-term impact of robbing multi-national companies of research and development building blocks.

"It's important to account for the full supply chain – basically selling a developed product in the future, and all the derivatives that you're gonna get out of it," Div said.

"In our assessment, we believe that we're talking about trillions, not billions," Div added. "The real impact is something we're going to see in five years from now, ten years from now, when we think that we have the upper hand on pharmaceutical, energy, and defense technologies. And we're going to look at China and say, how did they bridge the gap so quickly without the engineers and resources?"

Cybersecurity firms [including Eset Research](#) have previously detailed supply chain attacks carried out by APT 41. In August 2019, Mandiant released a [report](#) detailing the evolution of the group's tactics, and techniques, as well as descriptions of individual criminal actors.

According to Cybereason's report, the APT group leveraged both known and previously undocumented malware exploits, using "digitally signed kernel-level rootkits as well as an elaborate multi-stage infection chain," comprising six parts. That clandestine playbook helped criminals gain unauthorized control of computer systems while remaining undetected for years.

The FBI [has consistently warned](#) that China poses the largest counterintelligence threat to the U.S. "[China has] a bigger hacking program than that of every other major nation combined. And their biggest target is, of course, the United States," FBI Director Christopher Wray said Friday, during a public forum at the McCain Institute.

The CCP continues to increase its theft of U.S. technology and intellectual property by conducting illicit economic activities, [according to the latest annual survey by the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative](#).

Wray says the FBI opens a new China counterintelligence investigation every 12 hours. Last year, the U.S. government attributed a massive attack [targeting Microsoft Exchange servers](#) to the Chinese state actors. "Across the Chinese state, in pretty much every major city, they have thousands of either Chinese government or Chinese government-contracted hackers who spend all day – with a lot of funding and very sophisticated tools – trying to figure out how to hack into companies networks... to try to steal their trade secrets," Wray noted.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Middle-school students robbed at gunpoint
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/police-3-middle-school-students-robbed-at-gunpoint-in-south-seattle
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Seattle Police say three middle school students were robbed at gunpoint Monday in South Seattle, and are investigating two separate incidents.</p> <p>According to police, there were two robberies late Monday afternoon. Around 4:10 p.m., police say two students were at Brighton Playfield sitting on swings, when two men showed up and demanded their backpacks and cellphones. The men were wearing black clothes and ski masks, and both held the kids at gunpoint.</p> <p>The students handed over their things, and the two men ran off. The children then told school staff what happened, who called police.</p>

	<p>Authorities say a short time later, another middle school student was walking near 35th Ave S and S Alaska St, when two men in black clothes and ski masks approached him. The child ran away down an alleyway, but the men caught up to him and stole his backpack, police say.</p> <p>"It's especially unfortunate because a lot of kids walk home from school from Aki Kurose, so they like to stop by the playground. There are younger kids that play at the playground so it's pretty concerning," said parent Kat Henolson, "but I'm not going to let my kids walk home from Aki at least not for a while and not unless they're in a bigger group."</p> <p>Seattle Police says they are increasing patrols in the area, and detectives are investigating both incidents. "Some kids are really scared and don't want to go to school because of that. There are a lot of mixed feelings," said Ren Henolson, middle school student.</p> <p>"It makes me kind of worried about being around in the area alone or even with friends," said Hazel Morgan, middle school student.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Tacoma PD: 100% increase in arsons
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/tacoma-police-grappling-with-100-increase-in-arsons-as-they-look-to-id-new-suspect
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. - Tacoma police are looking to identify a man they say is responsible for an arson that caused \$5,000 worth of damage.</p> <p>Police say on April 23, a man piled cardboard into a dumpster behind a building, lit it on fire and walked away.</p> <p>He is described as a white man in his early to mid-20s, with a medium build, shoulder-length red, curly hair.</p> <p>A \$1,000 reward will be offered for information that leads to an arrest. If you recognize him, leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers of Puget Sound at 1-800-222-TIPS.</p> <p>The search for this suspect comes a day after a suspected serial arsonist was arrested in Tacoma.</p> <p>Tacoma's crime numbers show the city is seeing a massive increase in arsons. According to the data, there is a 100% increase in this year's numbers compared to the same time period as last year.</p> <p>Numbers show there have been 108 arsons reported in the city between Jan 1 and April 24 of 2022. For the same time period last year, there were 54 arsons.</p> <p>The suspect arrested on May 2 was booked into jail for investigation of first-degree arson and two counts of second-degree arson.</p> <p>Police said the suspect is a serial arsonist.</p> <p>According to court documents: "The reports indicate that the defendant has multiple prior arrests for arson in the downtown area. One report states, "The fact that his fires have not killed anybody is more luck at this point than anything that law enforcement or TFD (Tacoma Fire Department) have been able to do. Whenever Kibathi gets out of jail he goes on arson sprees and lights multiple dumpsters and other items on fire."</p> <p>Back in February, 42-year-old Sarah Ramey was arrested in connection to at least a dozen fires that occurred between the evening hours of Jan. 25 and the early morning hours of Jan. 26.</p>

	<p>Detectives also said they found a checkbook belonging to the victim of a fatal fire on Dec. 31, 2021 in Ramey's truck. 83-year-old James Elliot died of asphyxia in the fire at his home on Rosemount Way.</p> <p>At the time, the Rosemount fire's cause was determined to be electrical, but the cause remains under investigation.</p> <p>Ramey has not officially been linked to that deadly fire, but it did happen in the same area where the January string of arsons happened.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Spokane police: 5 reported shootings
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/five-shootings-reported-overnight-spokane/293-607338e0-b4d9-4d1d-b38a-bf3d72b5d717
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — One woman was shot overnight and was sent to the hospital with serious injuries. This is one of five reported shootings last night. The first call came in around 10:30 p.m. in the Hillyard area.</p> <p>We know Spokane police responded to five reported shootings, but only four of those shootings were confirmed.</p> <p>Police have not confirmed which home on Dalton Avenue the woman was shot at. But, they say it appears a shooter or shooters walked up to the home and fired about 20 rounds inside*.</p> <p>Small children were also inside the home, but the woman was the only one injured.</p> <p>Mike Fagan told me he heard the gunshots that hit his truck.</p> <p>After learning it was one of five others shootings last night, he says he's worried for Spokane.</p> <p>"I'm sure that the vast majority of the folks that live in Spokane right now will agree with my sentiment," Fagan said. "This is not the Spokane that I grew up with. I've lived in this particular house and in on this block for going on 30 years now. This place has been so peaceful, minimal crime, if anything."</p> <p>Spokane Mayor Nadine Woodward and Police Chief Craig Meidl recently formed a violent crimes task force. With two sergeants and five other officers, the task force is expected to address the increasing trend of drive by shootings in the city.</p> <p>"They're gonna have this free time to go out and be able to do specific interdiction by looking for the offenders who are most prolific," SPD Assistant Chief Justin Lundgren said.</p> <p>Assistant Chief Lundgren told me the task force will be proactive and reactive in its efforts, which is how he says the group is responding the shootings last night.</p> <p>"When these shootings happen, particularly the ones that are involving gang members, there is a tendency for incidents in the future in retaliation for those," Lundgren said, "So, there'll be an important opportunity for us to be able to trainee interject ourselves before the next the next shooting in relation to the first."</p> <p>So far in 2022, through the end of April, there have been 53 shootings in Spokane, 26 of those are classified as drive-bys.</p> <p>Comparing that to the first 3 months of 2021 there were 45 shootings through the end of April with 12 classified as drive-bys.</p> <p><u>TOTAL YEAR NUMBERS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018 - 36 shootings 24 drive-bys

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2019 - 52 shootings 28 drive-bys • 2020 - 94 shootings 42 drive-bys • 2021 -151 shootings 41 drive-bys
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HEADLINE	05/03 Inmate, jail official 'special relationship'
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/ap-top-news-alabama-florence-84a97f256406f02e8c2ee1f6a46f8c0d
GIST	<p>FLORENCE, Ala. (AP) — An escaped Alabama inmate had a “special relationship” with the jail official authorities believe assisted in his escape, a sheriff’s office said Tuesday.</p> <p>A manhunt was underway for Casey White, who was awaiting trial on a capital murder case, and Vicky White, a jail official, after the pair vanished after leaving the Lauderdale County Detention Center on Friday morning. The two are not related, authorities said.</p> <p>“Investigators received information from inmates at the Lauderdale County Detention Center over the weekend that there was a special relationship between Director White and inmate Casey White. That relationship has now been confirmed through our investigation by independent sources and means,” the Lauderdale County Sheriff’s Office said in a statement to news outlets. The office did not elaborate on the nature of that relationship.</p> <p>On Friday morning, Vicky White, 56, told coworkers the 38-year-old inmate needed to go to the courthouse for a mental health evaluation. She was escorting the inmate alone, which the sheriff said is a violation of department policy. That afternoon, when she was not answering the phone, authorities discovered the two were missing, and no such evaluation had been scheduled. Her patrol car was found abandoned in the parking lot of a shopping center.</p> <p>A warrant was issued Monday for Vicky White’s arrest on charges of assisting in an escape.</p> <p>Family members and colleagues said they are bewildered by the involvement of Vicky White, who had worked for the sheriff’s office for 16 years, with the inmate who was already serving a 75-year prison sentence for attempted murder and other crimes.</p> <p>“I just can’t picture Vicky running off with that man,” her former mother-in-law, Frances White, said in a telephone interview. She remained fond of her daughter-in-law decades after she divorced her son in 1991. He died earlier this year.</p> <p>She said her former daughter-in-law was kind and always wanted to help others, but added that she was sometimes private. “Vicky was a person who kept all of her thoughts and troubles to herself,” she said.</p> <p>Vicky White had no children, her former-mother-in-law said, and had recently sold her house, a sprawling property of 4 acres (1.6 hectares) she had originally bought to be close to her parents. The property, which included a trailer and barn, was “really too big” for one person, Frances White said.</p> <p>WAAY reported Vicky White sold her home for \$95,500 just 12 days before disappearing. The purchase price was below the market value for the area, the station reported.</p> <p>Lauderdale County Sheriff Rick Singleton said Monday that Vicky White had announced plans to retire and the day she disappeared would have been her last day at work.</p> <p>“This is not the Vicky White we know, by any stretch of the imagination,” Singleton said Monday.</p> <p>The U.S. Marshals Service on Tuesday said the pair might be traveling in a 2007 orange or copper colored Ford Edge with minor damage on the rear left bumper.</p> <p>Authorities have said Casey White, who stands 6 feet, 9 inches (2.06 meters) tall, should be recognizable by his size. Authorities warned that anyone seeing the pair should not approach them.</p>

“The subjects should be considered dangerous and may be armed with an AR-15 rifle, handguns and a shotgun,” the Marshals Service said in the bulletin.

Casey White was serving time for a string of crimes that included attempted murder, robbery and burglary. While in prison, he had confessed to the 2015 stabbing death of a 58-year-old woman, authorities said, which caused him to be brought to the Lauderdale County jail for court proceedings. The sheriff said they believe White plotted an earlier escape from the jail in 2020 when they found a makeshift knife.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Ex-Nigeria official pleads guilty ESD fraud
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/former-nigerian-official-pleads-guilty-to-350000-in-state-unemployment-fraud/
GIST	<p>Nearly two years after thieves defrauded Washington state of \$650 million in unemployment benefits, a former Nigerian government official has pleaded guilty to his role in the heist.</p> <p>Abidemi Rufai, 45, of Lekki, Nigeria, pleaded guilty Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Tacoma to charges that he used stolen Social Security numbers and other personal data to file \$350,763 in fake claims for pandemic unemployment benefits in spring of 2020, the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Seattle said Wednesday.</p> <p>Rufai, who has been in custody since his May 2021 arrest at New York’s Kennedy International Airport as he was about to fly to Nigeria, was working as a special assistant to the governor of Nigeria’s Ogun state at the time.</p> <p>Rufai also pleaded guilty to stealing benefits from other states, as well as another \$250,000 from other federal programs, according to a U.S. Attorney’s Office statement. From 2017 and 2020, Rufai filed fraudulent claims for \$1.7 million in federal tax refunds, of which \$90,877 was paid out.</p> <p>Rufai has agreed to repay the stolen funds, though it wasn’t clear how he would make payments or whether his agreement meant he still had access to the stolen funds.</p> <p>“He has agreed to disclose all of his assets and to cooperate in US government efforts to recover on those assets,” U.S. Attorney’s Office spokesperson Emily Langlie said in an email Wednesday. “At this point we don’t know what kind of recovery will result.”</p> <p>Roughly \$270 million stolen from the Employment Security Department is believed to have been transferred overseas before investigators or banks could freeze the funds, state officials have said. About \$380 million has been recovered, ESD officials have said.</p> <p>Rufai’s 2021 arrest came almost a year to the day after ESD officials announced the fraud, the biggest in state history, and said they would temporarily suspend unemployment benefit payments.</p> <p>That suspension and the subsequent tightening of filing requirements contributed to massive delays in benefit payments to tens of thousands of Washingtonians laid off during the first weeks of the pandemic.</p> <p>Rufai’s arrest revealed important details as to how criminals could bypass ESD’s security systems using a simple feature of Google’s free Gmail service.</p> <p>Gmail allows account holders to create dozens of additional email addresses simply by adding periods to the original address, investigator have said. Because Gmail doesn’t recognize periods, any emails sent to those so-called dot variant addresses are all routed to the inbox of the original Gmail address.</p>

	<p>Rufai used the dot variant addresses to create multiple accounts in the Washington state system that authenticates online users of government services, investigators have said. He then filed for benefits with the ESD using stolen personal identities of real Washington residents. One reason the ruse was effective is that any emails sent by ESD on behalf of these claimants were all routed to Rufai's inbox.</p> <p>Rufai's plea, two years after his crime, highlights the challenges investigators have had in tracking down suspects in the fraud that struck ESD and most other states.</p> <p>So far, just a handful of suspects have been charged in the ESD case. These include Chukwuemeka Onyegbula, a Nigerian IT engineer charged with stealing roughly \$290,000 in benefits from ESD and from other states; Reyes De La Cruz III, a former ESD employee charged with stealing at least \$360,000 in jobless benefits; and Seattle residents Bryan Alan Sparks, 40, and Autumn Gail Luna, 22, who were charged with stealing at least \$500,000 in jobless benefits from ESD and \$520,000 in Small Business Administration loans.</p> <p>Prosecutors have agreed to recommend no more than six years in prison for Rufai, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 FBI searching for convicted Auburn couple
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/fbi-searching-for-auburn-couple-convicted-in-30-million-fraud-scheme-who-skipped-court-date/
GIST	<p>Arrest warrants have been issued for a couple convicted of operating a Ponzi-like scheme through the now-bankrupt Northwest Territorial Mint in Federal Way, defrauding thousands of investors out of more than \$30 million.</p> <p>Former Mint President Bernard Ross Hansen, 61, and his partner, Diane Renee Erdmann, were to be sentenced Friday in U.S. District Court after being convicted last year of mail and wire fraud in a gold bullion scheme that prosecutors say left 3,000 victims in its wake.</p> <p>A jury, after two days of deliberations, convicted Hansen of 14 federal felony counts of mail and wire fraud. The panel also convicted Hansen's "vault manager" and girlfriend, Diane Renee Erdmann, 49, of 13 felony fraud counts.</p> <p>At the time Hansen was convicted, federal prosecutors asked U.S. District Judge Richard Jones to remand him into custody, calling him a danger to the community and out of concerns that he might contact witnesses and victims. He also has previous convictions for possessing a machine gun and failing to report a financial transaction of more than \$10,000. But the judge denied the motion and allowed Hansen to remain free until his sentencing.</p> <p>A grand jury indicted Hansen and Erdmann in 2018 on charges that alleged the pair lied about gold and silver bullion shipments while using investors' money for personal luxuries and expenses — and to expand their business and draw in new victims.</p> <p>Northwest Territorial Mint, which also had offices in Auburn, sought bankruptcy protection in 2016 after Hansen and the company were hit with a record \$38.3 million civil verdict in a defamation and invasion of privacy lawsuit brought in Nevada by a Los Angeles businessman.</p> <p>Hansen's defense attorney, Angelo Calfo, did not immediately return a phone message seeking comment Tuesday. However, in a brief submitted before trial, Calfo said the couple should be acquitted because they lacked fraudulent intent.</p> <p>The Mint — which made coins and medallions and bought, sold and stored precious metals — by 2012 didn't have enough assets to cover customer orders, according to the indictment. Prosecutors allege</p>

Hansen and Erdmann started using the investments from new customers to pay money owed to older customers in an illegal Ponzi-like scheme.

In a defense sentencing memorandum filed last month, Calfo argued that Hansen lived a humble lifestyle and was motivated not by greed, but by responsibility. Despite operating a multimillion dollar company, Calfo said Hansen lived in a modest home and wore “the same humble shirts and jeans each day.”

“If Mr. Hansen were a greedy man, he could easily have done better for himself,” Calfo wrote. “Mr. Hansen, unlike most fraud defendants, was not motivated by personal greed. He instead just wanted his company to succeed.”

The indictment claimed that more than 50 people who had stored their precious metals at the Northwest Territorial Mint’s Federal Way and Auburn offices found \$4.9 million in bullion missing. Twenty customers involved in a “bullion-leasing program” were defrauded of an additional \$5 million, according to the indictment.

The indictment also alleges Hansen and Erdmann stole \$1 million more from a Canadian silver-bullion producer.

“They tried to make this company look solid — like the metals they sold — but in fact it was a house of cards,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Benjamin Diggs told the jury during the trial.

Federal prosecutors, in sentencing recommendations submitted to the court before Monday’s hearing, had recommended that Hansen serve at least 15 years in prison and be ordered to pay \$33 million in restitution. Prosecutors planned to ask the judge to sentence Erdman to 7 1/2 years in prison.

The couple disappeared from their Auburn home sometime around April 29 and are believed to be driving a blue 2005 Mazda MPV, according to the FBI.

The agency said the couple were last seen May 1 checking out of a Federal Way hotel and are traveling with a Cardigan Welsh corgi dog and paying for expenses with cash.

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HEADLINE	05/03 Assault on flight attendants; 60 days in jail
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/03/us/frontier-airlines-maxwell-berry-assault.html
GIST	<p>A 23-year-old Ohio man who the authorities say groped two flight attendants and punched a third before being duct-taped to his seat amid jeers from his fellow passengers on a flight last summer was sentenced on Tuesday to 60 days in jail.</p> <p>Parts of the episode, which occurred during a Frontier Airlines flight from Philadelphia to Miami on July 31, 2021, were recorded on video. It was among many altercations between service workers and angry customers that have received widespread publicity during the pandemic, particularly on commercial flights.</p> <p>In February, the man, Maxwell Berry of Norwalk, Ohio, pleaded guilty in United States District Court in Miami to three counts of assault. In addition to the jail term, Mr. Berry was fined \$2,500 and ordered to pay more than \$1,500 in restitution.</p> <p>Mr. Berry’s lawyer, Jason Kreiss, had argued in a memo to the court that he should not go to jail for the crime, saying that what he had done that day was out of character and that he had already suffered a severe punishment in the form of damage to his reputation.</p> <p>But in an interview on Tuesday with an ABC affiliate in Florida, WPLG, Jordan Galarza, the flight attendant whom Mr. Berry struck, called the 60-day sentence “a disgusting miscarriage of justice.”</p>

“He made an enemy of everyone on that flight,” Mr. Galarza said. He also defended the way Mr. Berry was physically restrained. Although it “looked a bit barbaric,” Mr. Galarza said, “the people on that aircraft saw justice happen — more than what we saw today.”

The confrontations on the July 31 flight began when Mr. Berry ordered a third alcoholic drink and brushed his empty cup against the backside of a flight attendant, who said, “Don’t touch me,” according to a criminal complaint.

Mr. Berry’s fellow passengers became involved after he later spilled the drink on himself and emerged from the bathroom shirtless, according to the authorities. A flight attendant told him he needed to get dressed and helped him find a shirt in his luggage. Mr. Berry then walked around the plane for about 15 minutes.

He groped two female flight attendants on at least two occasions, according to authorities, and then punched a male flight attendant. Videos of the episode show Mr. Berry tussling with a male flight attendant from his seat as passengers shout, “No!” A video shows crew members taping him to the seat.

While restrained, he apparently tried to bait others into conflict, saying, “My parents are worth two million goddamn dollars” and “I’m white. I’m sorry — I can’t change that,” a video shows.

At one point, someone yelled for Mr. Berry’s mouth to be taped shut, and he was briefly gagged.

In his memo to the court, Mr. Kreiss, Mr. Berry’s lawyer, emphasized the widespread attention that his client’s case had received. “This stigma will follow him around and hinder his personal relationships, his ability to obtain employment, his eligibility for housing, positions of trust, and will affect other life issues for the foreseeable future,” he wrote.

In an email after the ruling, Mr. Kreiss described the required jail time as not necessary but added, “Max is looking forward to moving on with his life and putting this incident behind him.”

Adam Hapner, the assistant U.S. attorney who worked on the case, declined to comment on the sentence.

To Mr. Galarza, the flight attendant, the trip was successful in at least one respect. He told WPLG that his main job on any aircraft “is to protect the passengers, including Maxwell Berry, who we did get to Miami safely that day.”

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HEADLINE	05/03 Portland police address rising homicides
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Portland-police-shift-resources-to-address-rising-17145930.php
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — As homicides in Portland, Oregon, continue to increase and with resources stretched “very thin”, Police Chief Chuck Lovell announced Tuesday he is shifting detectives from other divisions to help investigate recent killings.</p> <p>One area where resources are being pulled from is the cold case squad, which investigates unsolved slayings from 1970 to 2019. All three members of the team, two detectives and a sergeant, have been moved to the homicide unit.</p> <p>“These cold cases are very important to us. We know the importance they have to families,” Lovell said. “We’re not going away from that work, it’s just a temporary shift of resources to help with current rise in homicides.”</p> <p>Resources and officers from sex crimes, property crimes and human trafficking units have also been moved to help address the city’s killings and gun violence. As a result, the homicide unit has increased from 18 officers to 24.</p>

Homicides have been on the rise in Portland for the past few years. From 2019 to 2020, Portland had a sharper rise in killings — an 83% increase — than nearly all major cities. Nationally, homicides had increased by nearly 30% in the same time, based on FBI data.

City police and officials say the increase — which disproportionately affected Portland’s Black community — was fueled by gang-related arguments, drug deals gone awry and disputes among homeless people. The situation was exacerbated by the pandemic, economic hardships and mental health crises.

Last year, Portland recorded 90 homicides last year — shattering the city’s previous high of 66 set in 1987. So far this year, there have been 31 homicides. The Oregonian/OregonLive reports that nine of the homicides this year have resulted in an arrest.

In total, this year there have been nearly 500 shootings in Portland.

“We’ve had the perfect storm of things,” Lovell said. “Not only do we have a shrinking police department, we have the pandemic, a rise in shootings, a big cut to the budget in 2020, a loss of many officers between August of 2020 and now.”

Portland’s police department has struggled to keep up amid an acute staffing shortage and budget cuts. Currently, the bureau has 772 sworn members. Lovell says his ideal staffing level is 1,100.

Between August 2020 and November 2021, about 200 officers left the department. Many, in their exit interviews, cited low morale, lack of support from city officials and burnout from months of racial justice protests. In addition, Lovell says 90 officers will be eligible to retire this year.

However, the bureau hopes to hire more officers soon through recruitment and the retire-rehire program. The bureau just hired eight background investigators to help speed the process.

The bureau has also faced budget cuts.

In 2020, following the rallying cries to “defund the police,” some Portlanders demanded that \$50 million be cut from the police bureau’s budget, with the money going to community-driven initiatives. The City Council responded by cutting \$15 million. An additional \$12 million was cut due to pandemic-caused economic shortfalls.

As a result, school resource officers, transit police and a gun violence reduction team — which was found to disproportionately target Black Portland residents during traffic stops, according to an audit in March 2018 — were disbanded.

In November, 2021, officials partially restored the cut funds with City Council passing a fall budget bump that increased the \$230 million police budget by an additional \$5.2 million.

Lovell says that monetary conversations are continuing ahead of the annual budget process. The chief said that he is looking for “budgetary items” that “show support” for the police bureau and “commitment to public safety.”

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HEADLINE	05/03 Alaska prison gang leader, members guilty
SOURCE	https://www.justice.gov/usao-ak/pr/white-supremacist-gang-leader-and-members-and-associates-convicted-racketeering-and
GIST	WASHINGTON – Five members and associates of a violent white supremacist gang, the 1488s, were convicted today in Alaska by a federal jury of RICO conspiracy, murder in aid of racketeering, kidnapping, and assault.

Evidence presented at trial showed that the 1488s are a violent prison-based gang operating inside and outside of state prisons throughout Alaska. The 1488s use Nazi-derived symbols to identify themselves and their affiliation with the gang, including a 1488 “patch” tattoo which depicts an Iron Cross superimposed over a swastika. The tattoo can only be worn by “made” members who generally gained full membership by committing acts of violence on behalf of the gang. The gang has written rules and a code of conduct, including the creed that “the only currency we recognize is violence and unquestionable loyalty.”

Evidence presented at trial showed that Filthy Fuhrer, formerly known as Timothy Lobdell, 45, founded and led the 1488 gang from inside Alaska’s maximum-security prison, where he is serving a 19-year sentence for the attempted murder of an Alaska State Trooper. Fuhrer ordered members of the gang to commit violent kidnappings and assaults in the “free world” outside of prison. Trying to impose greater organization and structure with non-incarcerated members, Fuhrer believed that some members were defying the 1488 code of conduct and diminishing the power and influence of the gang. Fuhrer sent out a trusted lieutenant with a list of directives, these directives culminated in the kidnapping and assault of two low-level gang members on April 2, 2017, and July 20, 2017, and the kidnapping, assault, and murder of Michael Staton on Aug. 3, 2017.

According to evidence presented at trial, 1488 members Roy Naughton, aka Thumper, 43; Glen Baldwin, aka Glen Dog, 40; and Colter O’Dell, 29, worked with Craig King, aka Oakie, 56, who was a member of the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club, to kidnap and murder one of the victims, who had previously stolen from both King and the 1488s. King lined a room with plastic, where he and the 1488 defendants beat and tortured the victim. Baldwin and O’Dell then took the victim out to the woods, shot him, and burned his body. O’Dell earned his membership patch into the 1488s by committing the murder of Staton.

“The guilty verdicts today strike a significant blow to the highest levels of the 1488 gang,” said Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Polite, Jr., of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division. “The Department of Justice and our law enforcement partners remain committed to combating and dismantling violent white supremacist gangs.”

“Violent gangs, especially those based upon racial hatred, are a plague to our society. As this case demonstrates, the crimes of organized prison gangs often go beyond the prison walls bringing violence into our communities,” said U.S. Attorney S. Lane Tucker for the District of Alaska. “Today’s convictions are a major disruption to the operation of the 1488 prison gang and hold accountable those who order or commit brutal and heinous crimes. We will continue to work closely with our law enforcement partners to identify, investigate and prosecute violent gang crimes regardless of where they take place. There is no higher priority than keeping our communities and the citizens of Alaska safe.”

“Today’s verdict demonstrates the FBI’s commitment to investigating and dismantling violent gangs, regardless of where they are being operated and who is leading them,” said FBI Assistant Director Luis Quesada of the Criminal Investigative Division. “In collaboration with our federal, state, local and international partners, we will aggressively target and pursue violent offenders. This verdict sends a clear signal to others who engage in gang violence that we will hold them accountable and bring them to justice.”

“The inhumanity shown by members of the 1488 criminal enterprise, to include the kidnapping, torture, and murder of Michael Staton, is a gruesome example of why we must identify and dismantle violent criminal organizations,” said Special Agent in Charge Antony Jung of the FBI Anchorage Field Office. “The morally despicable extremist prison gang has been seriously undermined thanks to the robust and effective, coordinated law enforcement and prosecution efforts shown throughout this case. These convictions will certainly make our community a safer place.”

Fuhrer was convicted of racketeering conspiracy, conspiracy in aid of racketeering, murder in aid of racketeering, kidnapping resulting in death, three counts of kidnapping conspiracy, two counts of kidnapping and two counts of assault in aid of racketeering. Naughton was convicted of racketeering conspiracy, conspiracy in aid of racketeering, murder in aid of racketeering, kidnapping resulting in death,

	three counts of kidnapping conspiracy, two counts of kidnapping and two counts of assault in aid of racketeering. Baldwin, O'Dell, and King were convicted of racketeering conspiracy, conspiracy in aid of racketeering, murder in aid of racketeering, kidnapping resulting in death, and kidnapping conspiracy. All five defendants face a mandatory sentence of life in prison without parole for the murder.
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HEADLINE	05/03 Fentanyl drug illegally imported, smuggled
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/fentanyl-trip-drug-coming-america/story?id=84403096
GIST	<p>As fentanyl overdoses and deaths have been on the rise across America, investigators have been setting their sights internationally to stop the flow.</p> <p>Police and other experts say fentanyl and fentanyl-laced pills have been illegally imported from as far out as China and even smuggled through the U.S.-Mexico border.</p> <p>"I've been doing this for almost 10 years now. And at one time, we would never find fentanyl. Now we're catching it all the time -and it is coming in different forms," Robert Meza, an import specialist with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency, told ABC News.</p> <p>Even with some recent crackdowns by governments, the fentanyl is still making its way into the country, into the hands of dealers and victims who have no idea they're taking the potentially deadly substance, according to law enforcement.</p> <p>Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco told ABC News that the majority of fentanyl that his office has confiscated is in the form of counterfeit pills that are delivered in the mail. The pills are designed to look like painkillers and sold to unsuspected victims, especially kids and teens, Bianco said.</p> <p>"They think they're experimenting with other drugs," the sheriff told ABC News.</p> <p>Some dealers who have been arrested for selling the tainted pills, however, said they had full knowledge of what was going out into the street, the authorities said. Investigators said the dealers add fentanyl to other illicit substances, such as heroin, to drive new addiction and create repeat clients.</p> <p>Eric Falowski, who was sentenced to up to 25 years in prison in 2016 in Florida for intentionally adding fentanyl to counterfeit pills, told ABC News that he had his pills sent from a contact in China.</p> <p>"She actually solicited the relationship directly to me and said she can provide fentanyl. That was my best supplier," he told ABC News.</p> <p>Under pressure from the U.S., Chinese suppliers have had difficulty sending the pills straight to America, experts said. However, those suppliers have come up with an alternative plan that includes more pit stops.</p> <p>Investigators said Chinese drug suppliers send the ingredients to make fentanyl to cartels in Mexico. After creating the fentanyl, either in raw powder or pill form, the cartels would ship them across the border in trucks, according to investigators.</p> <p>Last year more than 11,000 pounds of fentanyl made its way into the U.S. and more than half of it came right through the border of Mexico and San Diego, according to investigators. That was more than double the amount of fentanyl seized at the border compared to 2020, investigators said.</p> <p>"What you're seeing now is something that was never possible when fentanyl was coming from China. And that is a coverage of fentanyl all across this country," Sam Quinones, the author of "Dreamland" and "Least of Us," which chronicled the country's opioid crisis, told ABC News.</p> <p>Border patrol agents have stepped up their searches for the pills and other related fentanyl contraband.</p>

	<p>In one instance, agents picked up two pounds of fentanyl and nearly 82 pounds of meth from a car. The small amount of fentanyl is much more potent than the dozens of pounds of meth, experts said.</p> <p>Investigators said they're not sure if they can stop the inflow of the tainted drugs, but reiterated that something needs to be done to stop the flow into the hands of unknowing victims.</p> <p>"America is being poisoned with fentanyl, and we don't even know it," Bianco said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/03 Conn. trooper arraigned: shooting death
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/cops-hold-courthouse-rally-state-trooper-arraigned-killing/story?id=84467705
GIST	<p>Dozens of police officers from multiple states held a rally outside a Connecticut courthouse Tuesday as a white state trooper they contend was charged with manslaughter for doing his job was arraigned in the 2020 killing of a Black 19-year-old alleged carjacker.</p> <p>Connecticut State Trooper Brian North, 31, appeared at a brief hearing in Superior Court in Milford, but did not enter a plea to a felony manslaughter charge stemming from the fatal shooting of Mubarak Soulemane.</p> <p>North, who is free on \$50,000 bail, did not speak at the hearing and a judge scheduled his next court date for June 2.</p> <p>Soulemane's mother, Omo Klusum Mohammed, attended the hearing and later said she and her family would not be intimidated from pursuing justice.</p> <p>"I feel in my heart they were here to try to intimidate us," Mohammed said at a post-hearing news conference outside the courthouse. "But there is no officer or any trooper who will intimidate us. We are here to stand for justice, and I'm here to stand for justice for my son, Mubarak Soulemane. And I hope and pray justice will be served and Brian North will go to jail."</p> <p>Mohammed vowed to attend every court hearing to ensure North is held accountable for her son's death.</p> <p>"We are here today for justice, justice for my son Mubarak Soulemane, who has been massacred by state Trooper Brian North," Mohammed said.</p> <p>Mohammed's attorney, Sanford Rubenstein, added, "Ultimately, this case will be decided on the evidence. And I believe once pictures of the truth, video of what happened, is shown to a jury, they will come to the same conclusion I have: that this was an execution."</p> <p>North was arrested last month and charged in Soulemane's death after the state inspector general released a lengthy report alleging North's use of deadly force was not justified in the January 2020 shooting of Soulemane.</p> <p>State Inspector General Robert Devlin Jr.'s investigation found that although Soulemane was allegedly armed with a steak knife, had stolen a Lyft rideshare vehicle and was apparently off his medication for schizophrenia, he was not a threat to North and other officers when he was shot multiple times.</p> <p>Soulemane was killed when North allegedly fired seven times at him through the closed driver's side window of a stolen Lyft vehicle after troopers stopped him and pinned him in on Interstate 95 in West Haven following a chase that reached speeds of 100 mph, according to the report.</p> <p>Devlin's investigation found that Soulemane was sitting behind the wheel of the car surrounded by troopers and officers from other agencies. He was trapped inside because North's cruiser was blocking the driver's side door.</p>

An officer from the West Haven Police Department was bashing in the passenger-side window with a baton and another trooper was poised to deploy a stun gun on Soulemane when North opened fire as Soulemane reached into his pocket and pulled a knife, according to the report.

"Stated briefly, the investigation establishes that, at the time Trooper North fired his weapon, neither he nor any other person was in imminent danger of serious injury or death from a knife attack at the hands of Soulemane," the inspector general concluded in his report. "Further, any belief that persons were in such danger was not reasonable. I therefore find that North's use of deadly force was not justified under Connecticut law."

But several dozen state police officers from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Pennsylvania who rallied in support of North outside the courthouse on Tuesday said they strongly disagree with Devlin's findings.

Andrew Matthews, executive director of the Connecticut State Police Union, said he and other union members believe North should not have been charged.

"When our troopers are, what we believe, prosecuted for doing their job, we will defend them," Matthews said at a news conference outside the courthouse prior to North's hearing. "We will defend their actions when we believe that they are justified in doing and performing their duties to protect the public."

Matthews said he and other members of the union felt "obligated" to rally around North, adding, "our troopers put their lives on the line every day to protect the public."

"And when people make split-second decisions that others can review over and over again and form their own judgment of what they did or what they would have done, we have to stand up for our troopers," Matthews said.

North's attorney, Jeffrey Ment, declined to comment on the case, but said, "Trooper North appreciated the support of his brother and sister officers from not only Connecticut, but also from surrounding states."

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